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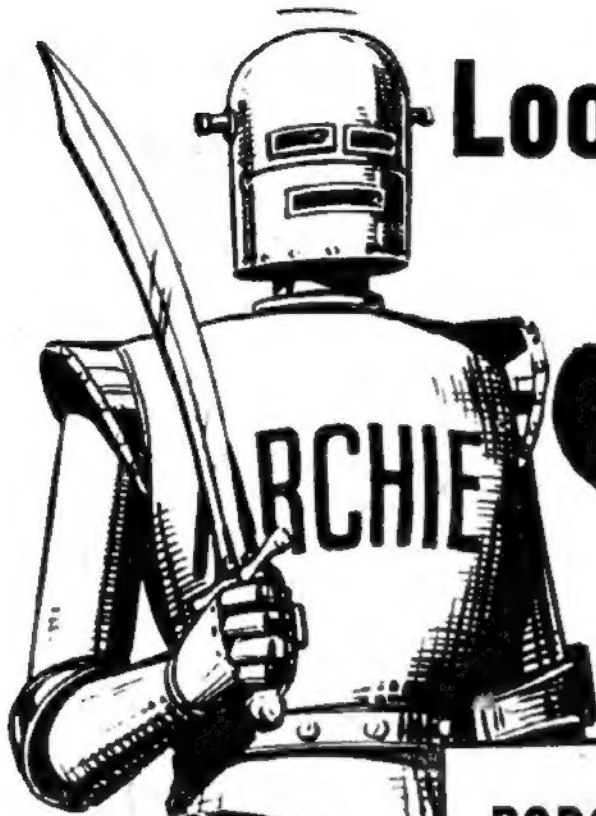
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FIVE STAR WEEKLY

PATHFINDER

AS THE YEAR 1941 DREW TO ITS CLOSE, JAPAN SPRANG HER BASE SURPRISE UPON A WAR-TORN WORLD. AT DAWN ON DECEMBER 7th. HER AIR FORCE HURLED DESTRUCTION ON PEARL HARBOUR. A SIMULTANEOUS ASSAULT WAS MADE UPON MANILLA... AND JAPAN WAS OPENLY AT WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN AND HER ALLIES. ATTACKS ON MALAYA, SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG FOLLOWED... AND BEFORE LONG THE LITTLE YELLOW MEN OF NIPPON THREATENED TO OVERRUN HALF THE EASTERN WORLD.



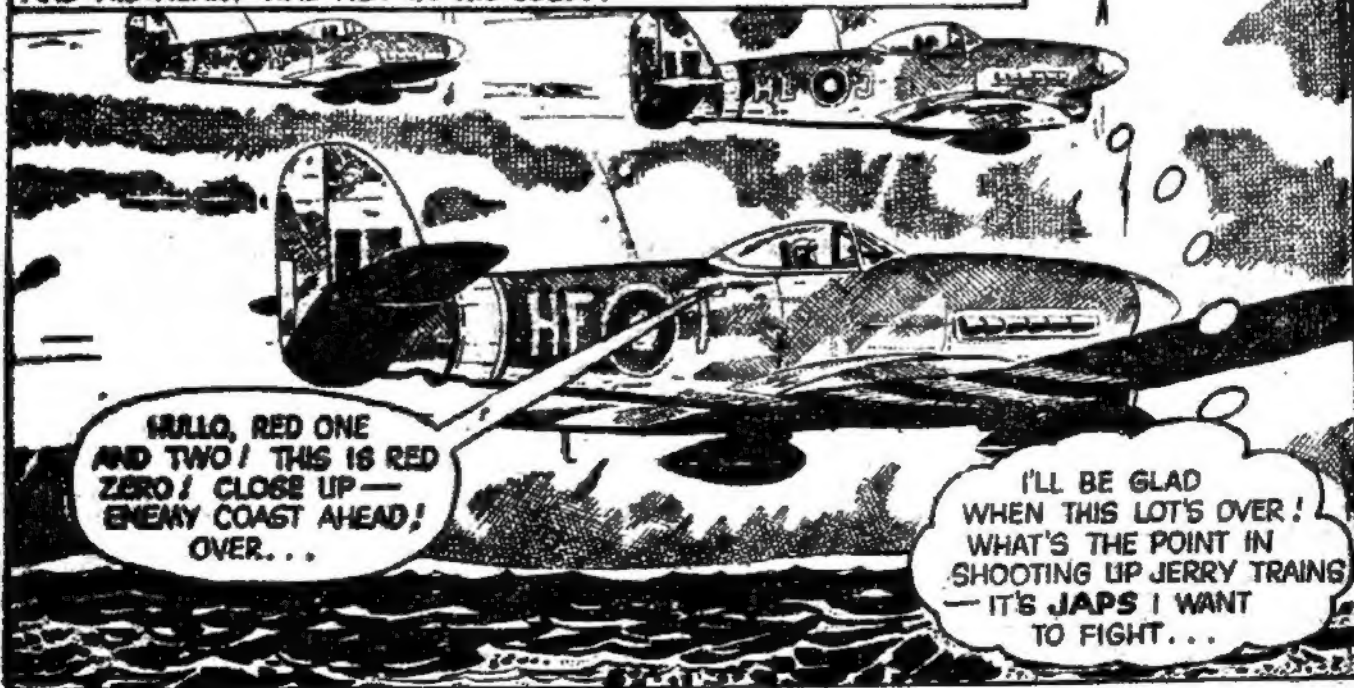
Chapter 1. FATAL MISTAKE

JAPAN'S TREACHEROUS ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR TWO HAD MANY REPERCUSSIONS... ONE OF WHICH WAS THE VOLUNTARY APPLICATION FOR SERVICE WITH THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OF HENRI LE JEUNE, AN EXPERIENCED AUSTRALIAN BUSH PILOT.



THIS IS THE LAST SCHOONER OF BEER THAT I'LL BE DRINKING AS A CIVILIAN FOR A LONG TIME. AS FROM TOMORROW I'LL BE IN THE R.A.A.F.— FLYING FIGHTERS AGAINST THE NIPS!

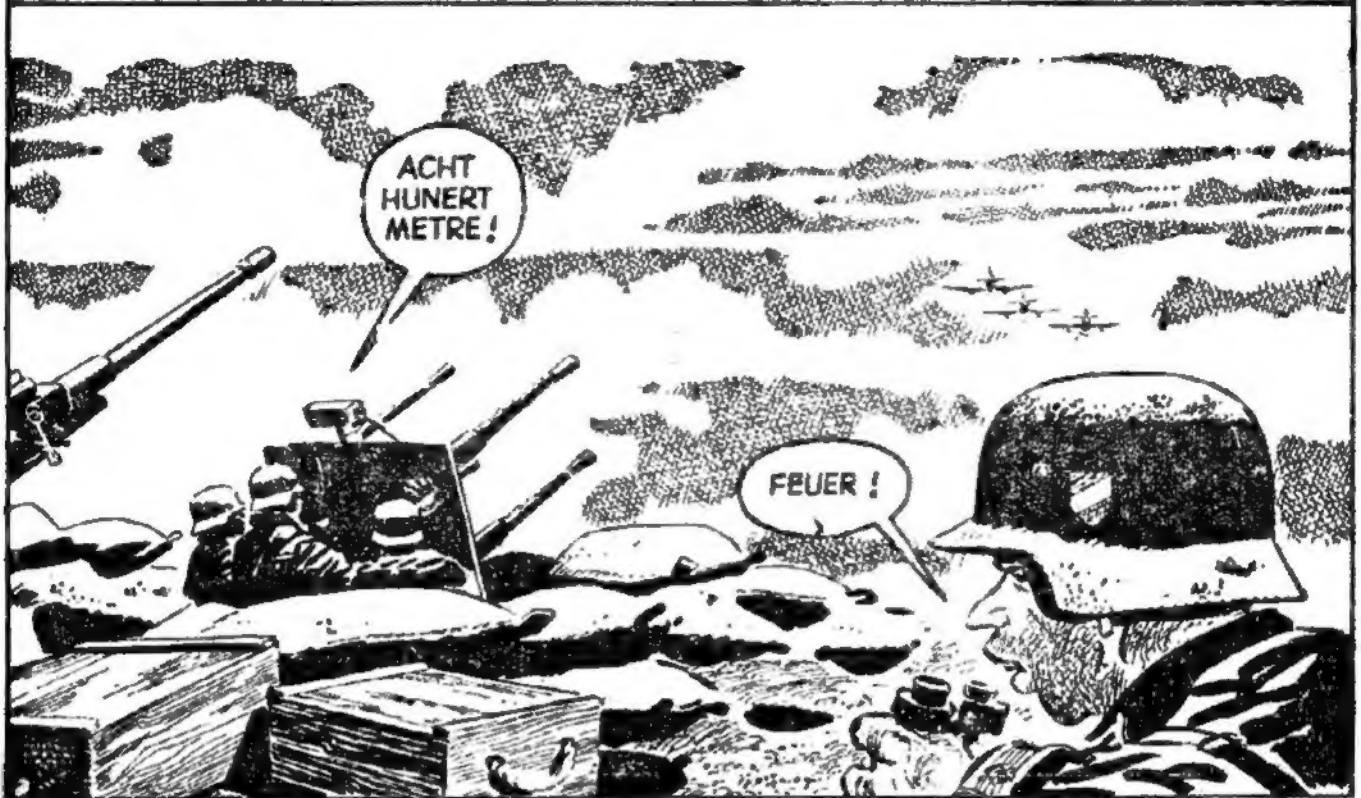
BUT THINGS DID NOT WORK OUT THE WAY LE JEUNE HAD PLANNED. THERE WERE VERY FEW FIGHTER AIRCRAFT IN THE FAR EAST — AND THE EUROPEAN THEATRE OF WAR DEPERATELY NEEDED EXPERIENCED PILOTS. SO, IN THE SUMMER OF 1943, LE JEUNE FOUND HIMSELF IN A TYPHOON SQUADRON ENGAGED IN SWEEPS OVER THE FRENCH COAST. BUT THIS WAS NOT LE JEUNE'S WAR — AND HIS HEART WAS NOT IN HIS JOB...



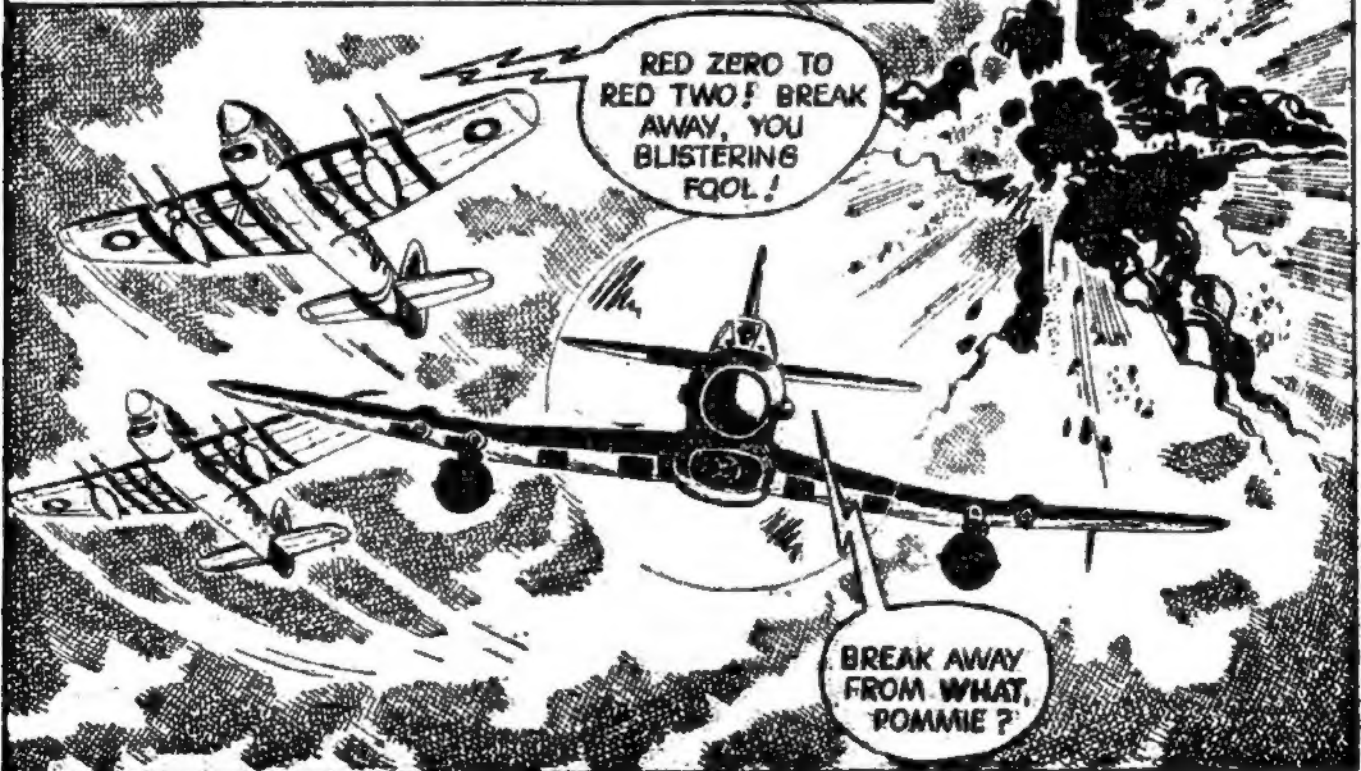
HALLO, RED ONE AND TWO! THIS IS RED ZERO! CLOSE UP — ENEMY COAST AHEAD! OVER...

I'LL BE GLAD WHEN THIS LOT'S OVER! WHAT'S THE POINT IN SHOOTING UP JERRY TRAINS — IT'S JAPS I WANT TO FIGHT...

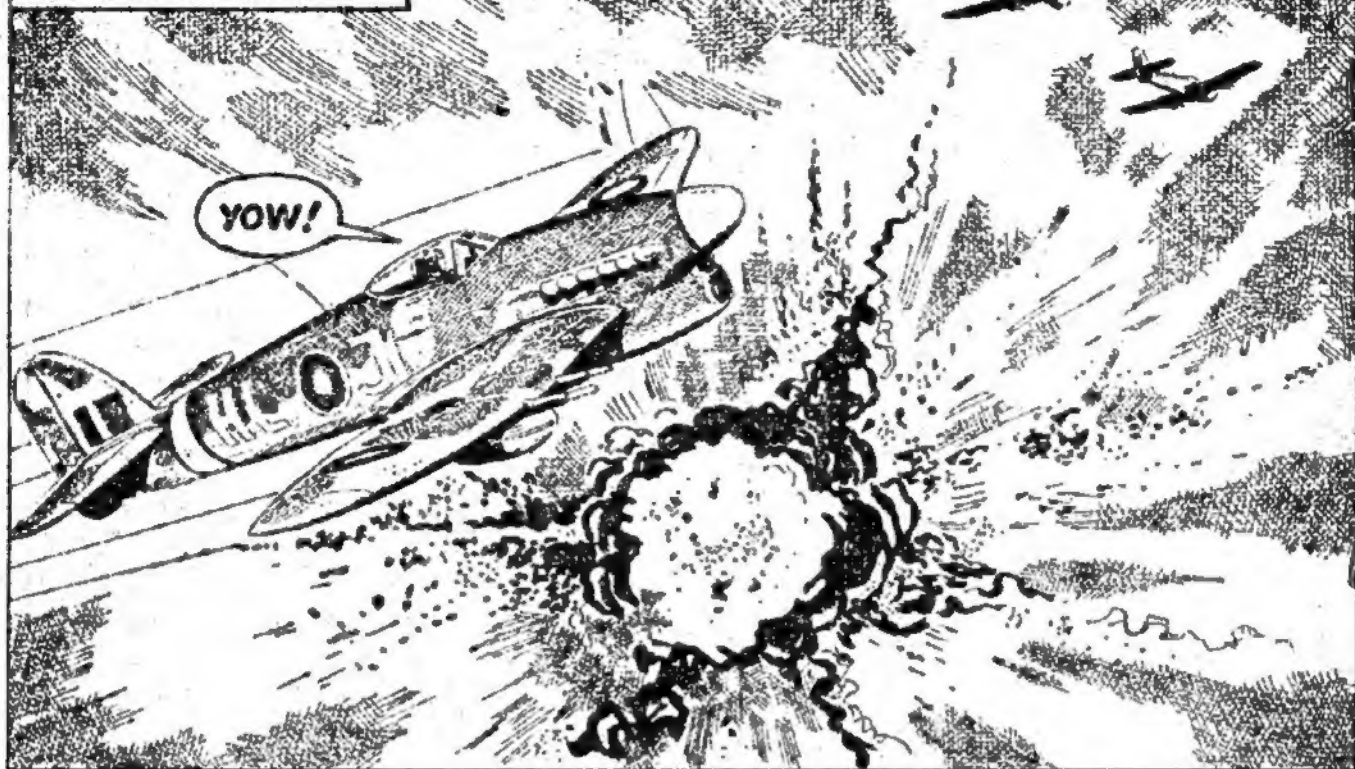
THE TYPHOON FLIGHT HAD BEEN BRIEFED TO ATTACK A GERMAN AMMUNITION TRAIN DISCOVERED EARLIER THAT DAY BY RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT. AS THE THREE FIGHTERS SWOOPED IN LOW OVER THE COASTAL DEFENCES...



LE JEUNE HAD A THEORY THAT LIGHT COASTAL FLAK WAS NOT SO DANGEROUS AS IT LOOKED — AND WHILE HIS COMPANIONS BANKED STEEPLY TO BREAK FORMATION, HE HELD HIS OWN MACHINE STRAIGHT AND LEVEL.



BUT THIS WAS NOT TO BE LE JEUNE'S LUCKY DAY. A FLAK SHELL BURST UNDER THE NOSE OF HIS TYPHOON—AND IN AN INSTANT A HAIL OF SHRAPNEL HAD RIDDLED HIS CONTROL PANEL.

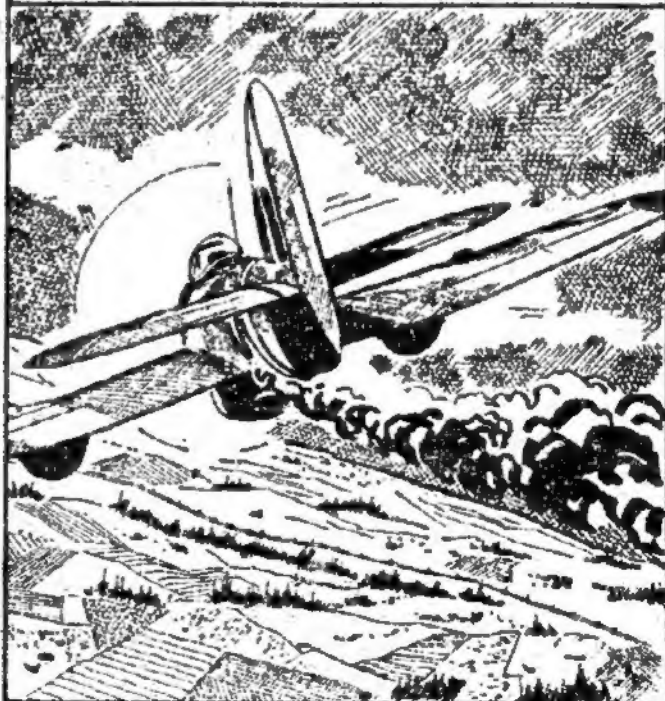


DAZED BY THE CATASTROPHE, LE JEUNE PULLED WILDLY AT THE STICK, AND FLUNG OPEN THE THROTTLE—AND THE TYPHOON ROCKETED UPWARDS AND AWAY...

MY CONTROLS ARE ALL RIGHT, ANYWAY! BUT IF MY FUEL TANK'S BEEN PUNCTURED, I HAVEN'T MUCH HOPE! IT'S TIME I GOT OUT OF HERE!

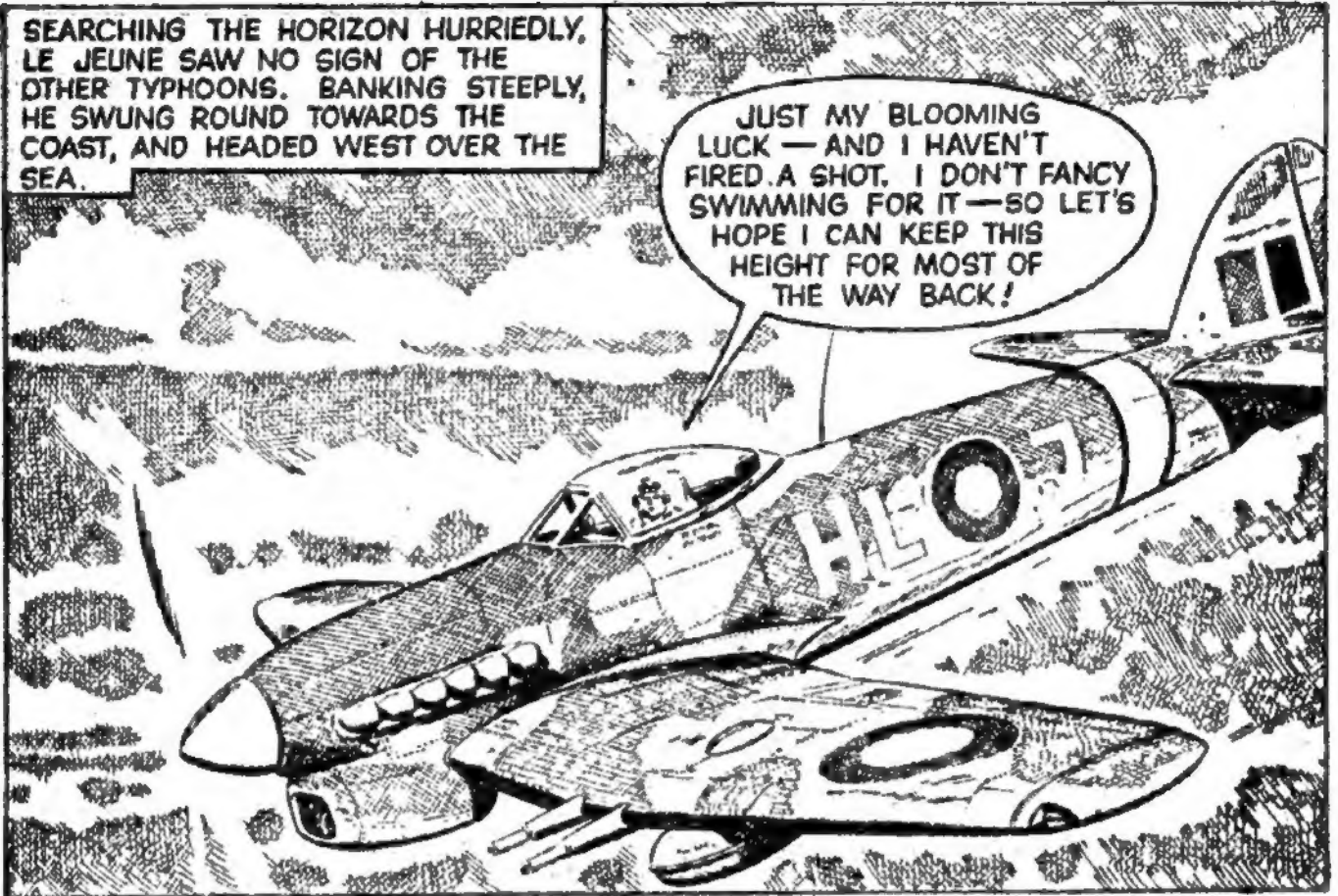


LE JEUNE FOUND THAT HIS COMPASS AND ALTIMETER WERE SHATTERED. A THIN STREAM OF OIL WAS SPURTING FROM THE ENGINE, AND SPRAYING BACK ALONG THE NOSE IN THE SLIPSTREAM. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE TYPHOON COULD NOT REMAIN AIRBORNE FOR VERY LONG.

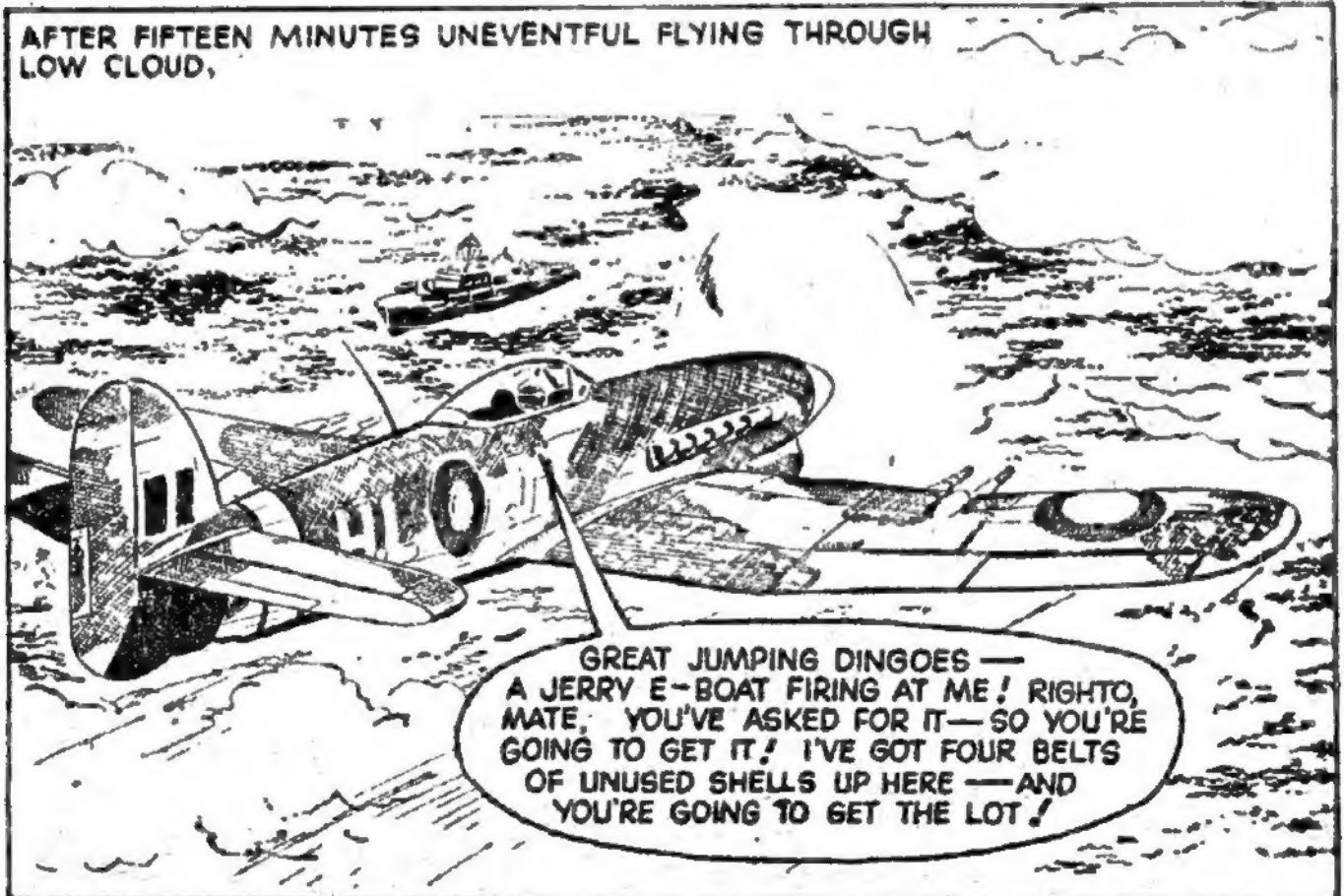


SEARCHING THE HORIZON HURRIEDLY, LE JEUNE SAW NO SIGN OF THE OTHER TYPHOONS. BANKING STEEPLY, HE SWUNG ROUND TOWARDS THE COAST, AND HEADED WEST OVER THE SEA.

JUST MY BLOOMING LUCK — AND I HAVEN'T FIRED A SHOT. I DON'T FANCY SWIMMING FOR IT — SO LET'S HOPE I CAN KEEP THIS HEIGHT FOR MOST OF THE WAY BACK!



AFTER FIFTEEN MINUTES UNEVENTFUL FLYING THROUGH LOW CLOUD,

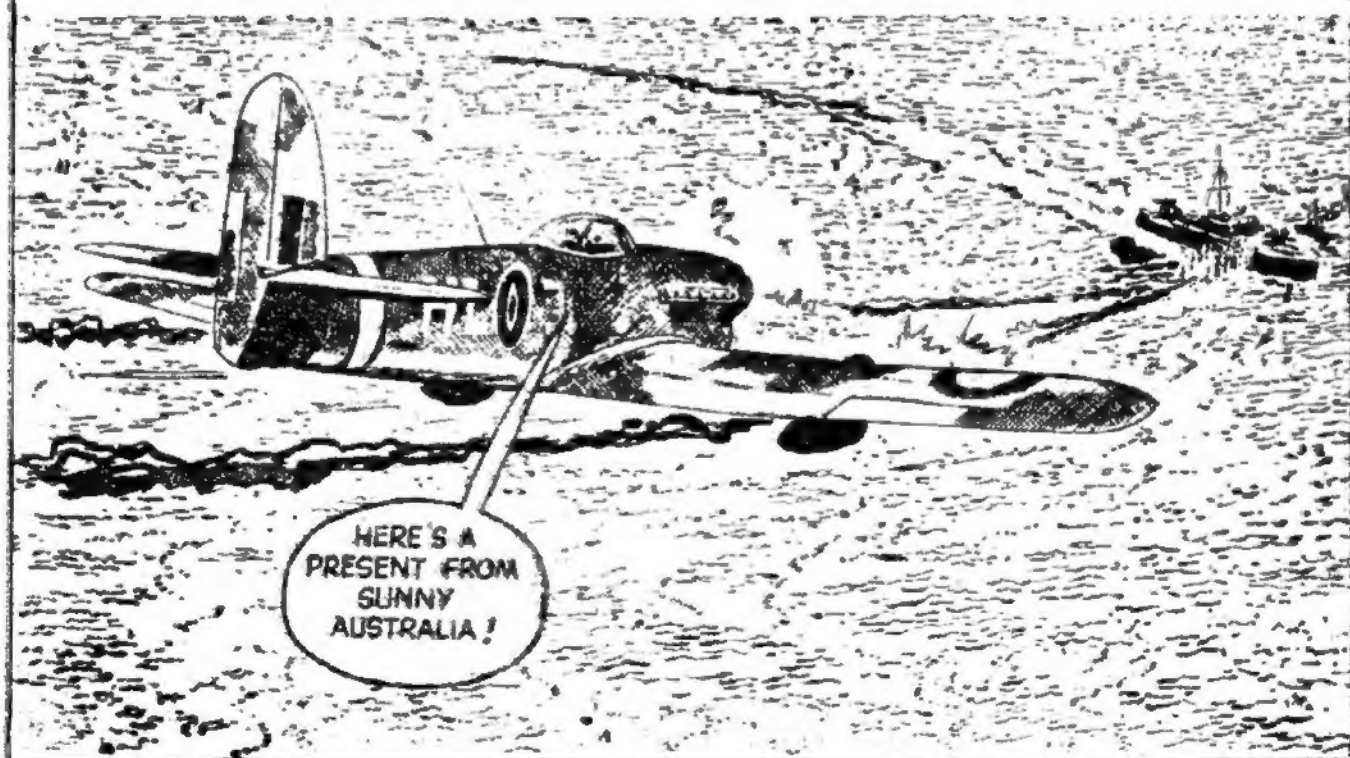


GREAT JUMPING DINGOES — A JERRY E-BOAT FIRING AT ME! RIGHTO, MATE. YOU'VE ASKED FOR IT — SO YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT! I'VE GOT FOUR BELTS OF UNUSED SHELLS UP HERE — AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET THE LOT!

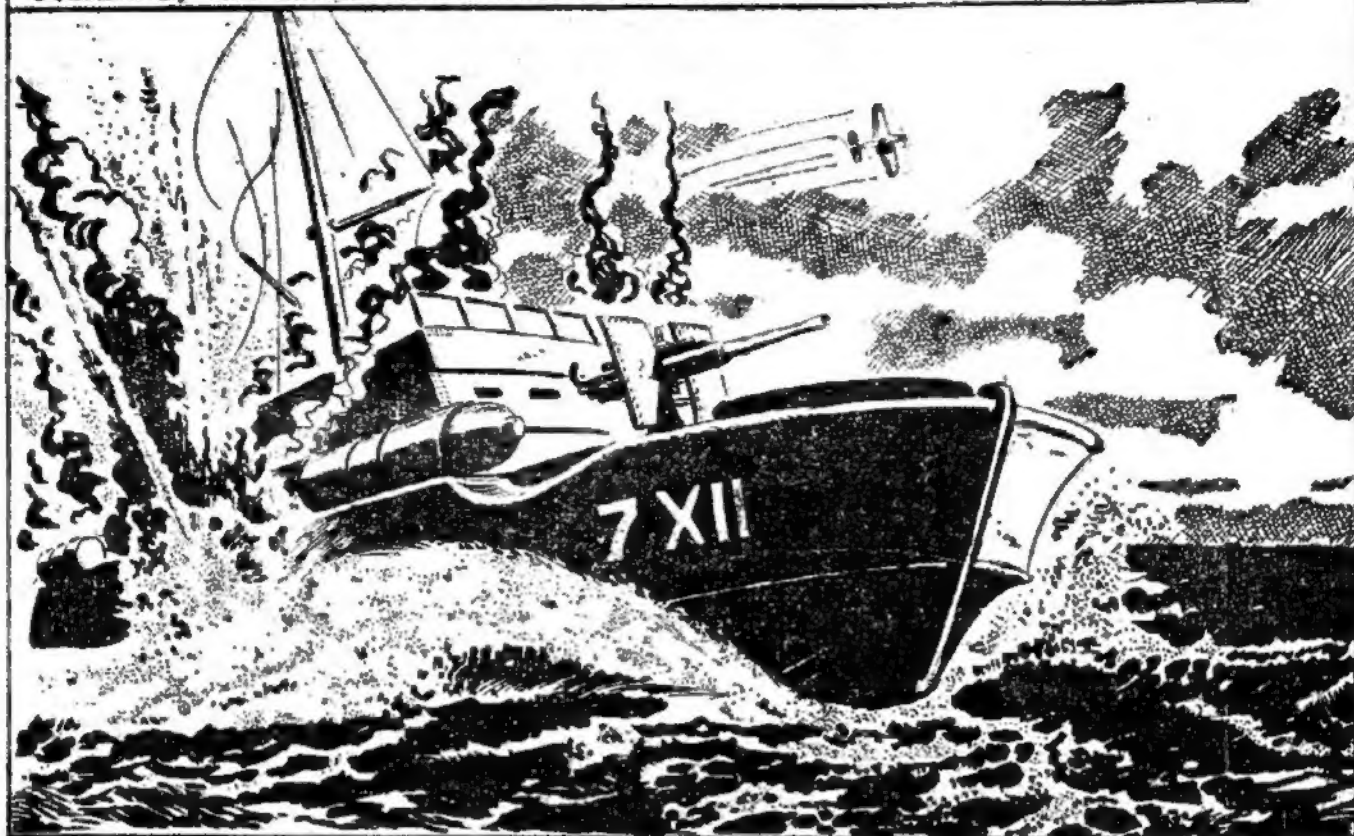
BUT LE JEUNE'S NEW-FOUND TARGET WAS NOT A GERMAN E-BOAT. IN THE POOR VISIBILITY, THE GUNNER ON BOARD A BRITISH MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT HAD MISTAKEN THE TYPHOON FOR A FOCKE WULF — AND HE ONLY REALISED HIS ERROR AS LE JEUNE BANKED STEEPLY AWAY...



SWEEPING IN TO THE KILL, LE JEUNE UNLEASHED THE TERRIBLE FIRE-POWER OF HIS CANNONS...



THE SHELLS RIPPED INTO THE M.T.B.'S THIN HULL AND AS THE TYPHOON HURTTLED OVERHEAD, THE SMALL CRAFT KEELED VIOLENTLY OVER...



AS THE SHATTERED M.T.B. SLOWLY FOUNDERED, THE CREW HURLED A DINGHY OVERBOARD AND FLUNG THEMSELVES INTO THE SEA, TAKING THEIR WOUNDED WITH THEM.



IN THE INSTANT BEFORE THE TYPHOON HAD STRUCK, THE COMMANDER HAD REALISED, AS HIS GUNNER HAD, THAT IT WAS A BRITISH AIRCRAFT—BUT HE DID NOT KNOW THAT HIS GUNNER HAD FIRED FIRST. AND NOW THE GUNNER LAY SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN THE DINGHY, AND COULD NOT TELL HIS TALE. AN S.O.B. WAS TRANSMITTED ON THE EMERGENCY RADIO...

WE'LL GET BACK, EVEN IF WE HAVE TO PADDLE ALL THE WAY! I'LL GET THAT TYPHOON PILOT, IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!

WE'LL NEED HELP SOON, SIR — JONES, HERE, IS IN A BAD WAY!

I MAY BE WRONG, SIR — BUT I HAD THE IDEA THAT JONES OPENED UP ON THAT KITE FIRST!

THE SIGNAL FROM THE DINGHY WAS SOON PICKED UP BY ANOTHER M.T.B. CRUISING IN THE SAME AREA...

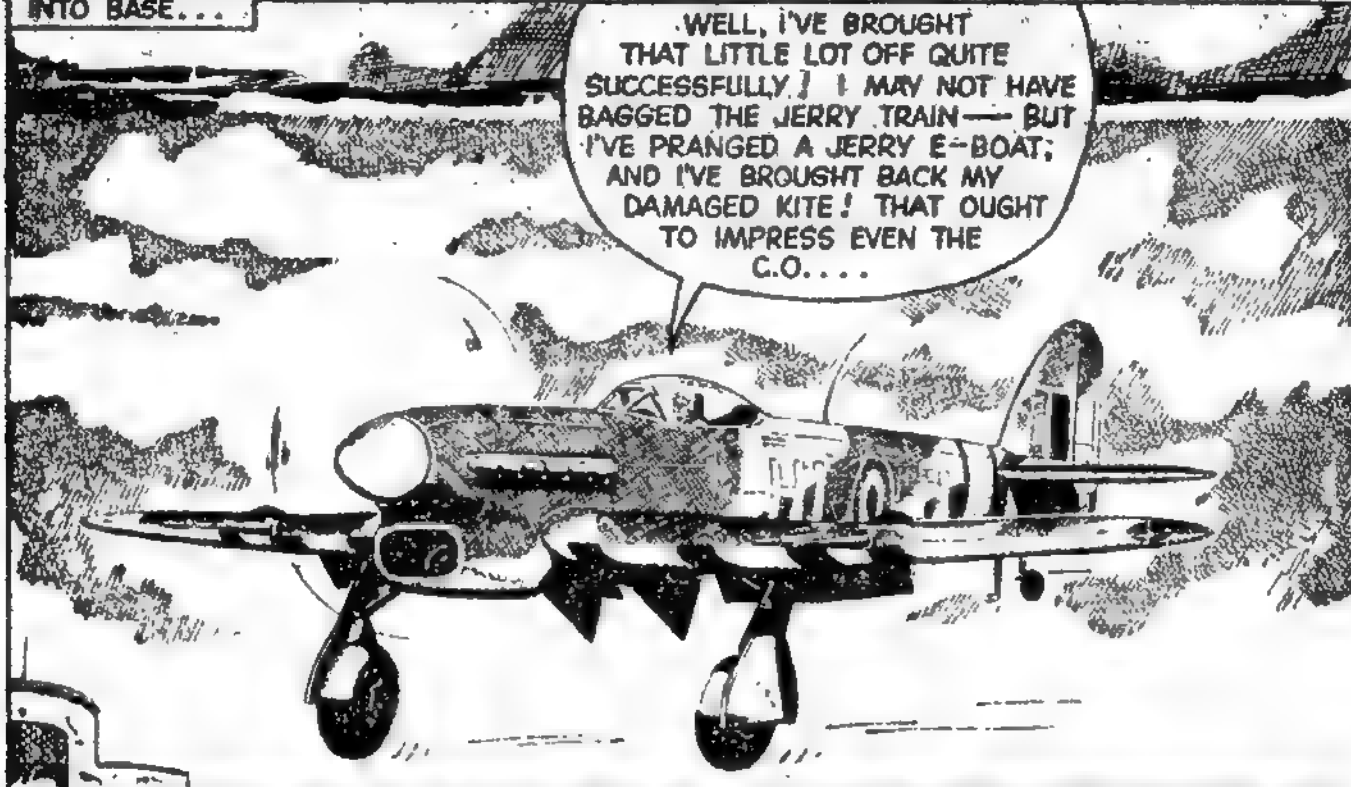
BAD LUCK, HAWKINS! WHAT WAS IT THAT SANK YOU — A MINE, OR A JERRY AIRCRAFT?

JERRY AIRCRAFT, MY FOOT! WE WERE SHOT UP BY A BRITISH TYPHOON!

EASY, THERE — THIS MAN'S BADLY WOUNDED!

MEANWHILE, LE JEUNE, ELATED BY HIS SUCCESS, WAS BRINGING HIS DAMAGED TYPHOON INTO BASE...

WELL, I'VE BROUGHT THAT LITTLE LOT OFF QUITE SUCCESSFULLY! I MAY NOT HAVE BAGGED THE JERRY TRAIN — BUT I'VE PRANGED A JERRY E-BOAT; AND I'VE BROUGHT BACK MY DAMAGED KITE! THAT OUGHT TO IMPRESS EVEN THE C.O....



BUT THE C.O. WAS NOT IMPRESSED...

SO YOU SEE, SIR, IT WASN'T SUCH A BAD SHOW AFTER ALL!

FRANKLY, LE JEUNE, IT SOUNDS A QUEER STORY TO ME! GERMAN E-BOATS ARE RARELY SEEN IN THAT STRETCH OF THE CHANNEL — AND THERE CERTAINLY HAVEN'T BEEN ANY RECONNAISSANCE REPORTS OF E-BOAT ACTIVITY FOR WEEKS! ARE YOU SURE YOU AREN'T INVENTING SOME OF THIS?



BUT LE JEUNE'S STORY WAS NOT A PRODUCT OF HIS IMAGINATION — AND PROCEEDINGS WERE AT THAT MOMENT GOING ON IN THE ADMIRALTY WHICH WERE SOON TO BRING THE FACTS OF THE CASE VERY SHARPLY HOME TO LE JEUNE'S C.O....



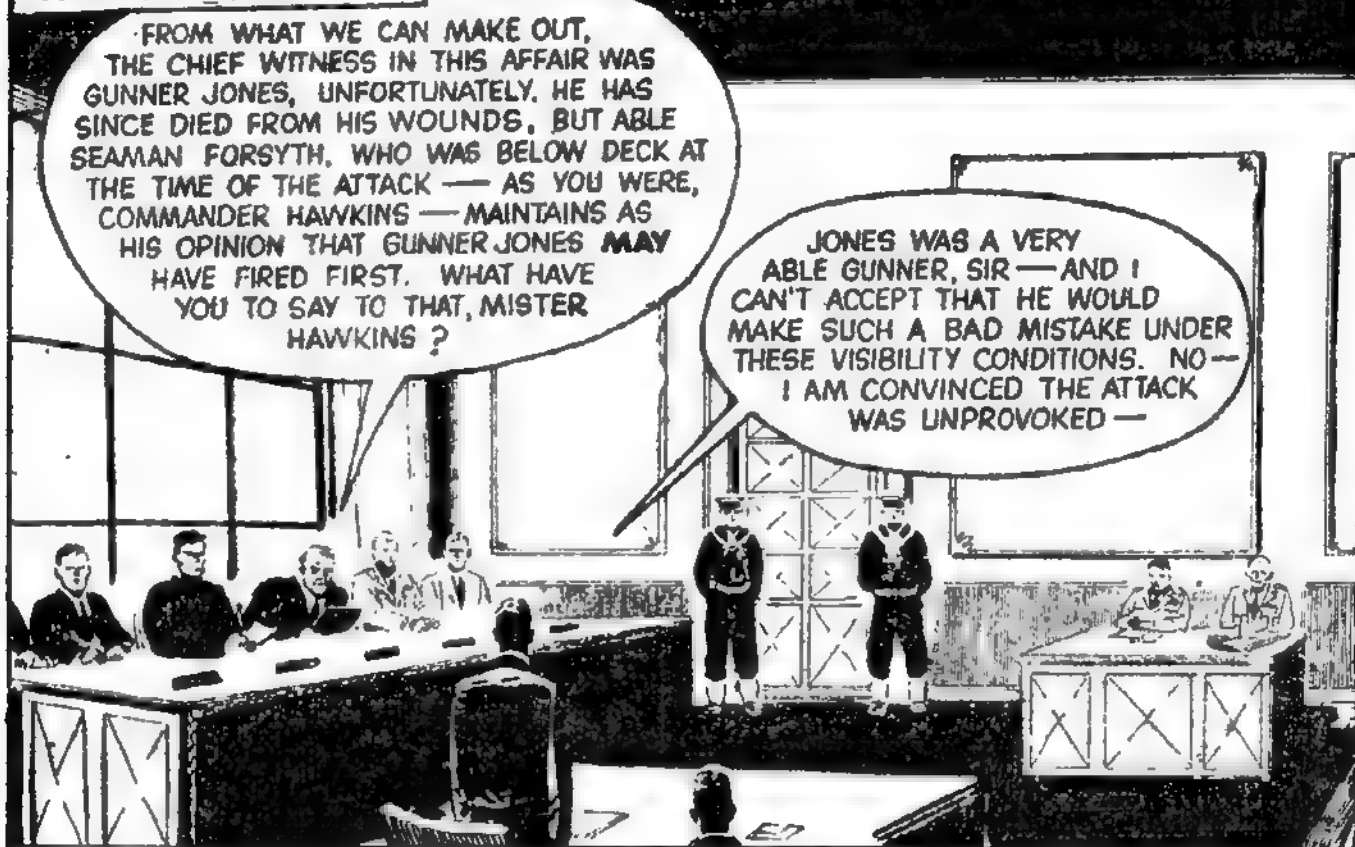
IT WAS SOON ESTABLISHED WHICH TYPHOON SQUADRON WAS MAKING REGULAR SWEEPS OVER THAT AREA OF THE CHANNEL — AND A PHONE CALL FROM AIR MINISTRY TO LE JEUNE'S C.O. MADE THE FACTS GRIMLY CLEAR...



LE JEUNE WAS GROUNDED — AND A WEEK LATER HE WAS SUMMONED BEFORE THE COURT OF ENQUIRY...

FROM WHAT WE CAN MAKE OUT, THE CHIEF WITNESS IN THIS AFFAIR WAS GUNNER JONES, UNFORTUNATELY, HE HAS SINCE DIED FROM HIS WOUNDS, BUT ABLE SEAMAN FORSYTH, WHO WAS BELOW DECK AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACK — AS YOU WERE, COMMANDER HAWKINS — MAINTAINS AS HIS OPINION THAT GUNNER JONES MAY HAVE FIRED FIRST. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY TO THAT, MISTER HAWKINS?

JONES WAS A VERY ABLE GUNNER, SIR — AND I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT HE WOULD MAKE SUCH A BAD MISTAKE UNDER THESE VISIBILITY CONDITIONS. NO — I AM CONVINCED THE ATTACK WAS UNPROVOKED —



LE JEUNE GAVE THE COURT HIS VERSION OF THE INCIDENT — BUT HIS DEFIANT MANNER DID NOT CREATE A VERY FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION. FINALLY THE COURT WAS CLEARED — AND AMONG THE OTHER THINGS THAT WERE DISCUSSED WAS LE JEUNE'S PREVIOUS RECORD...

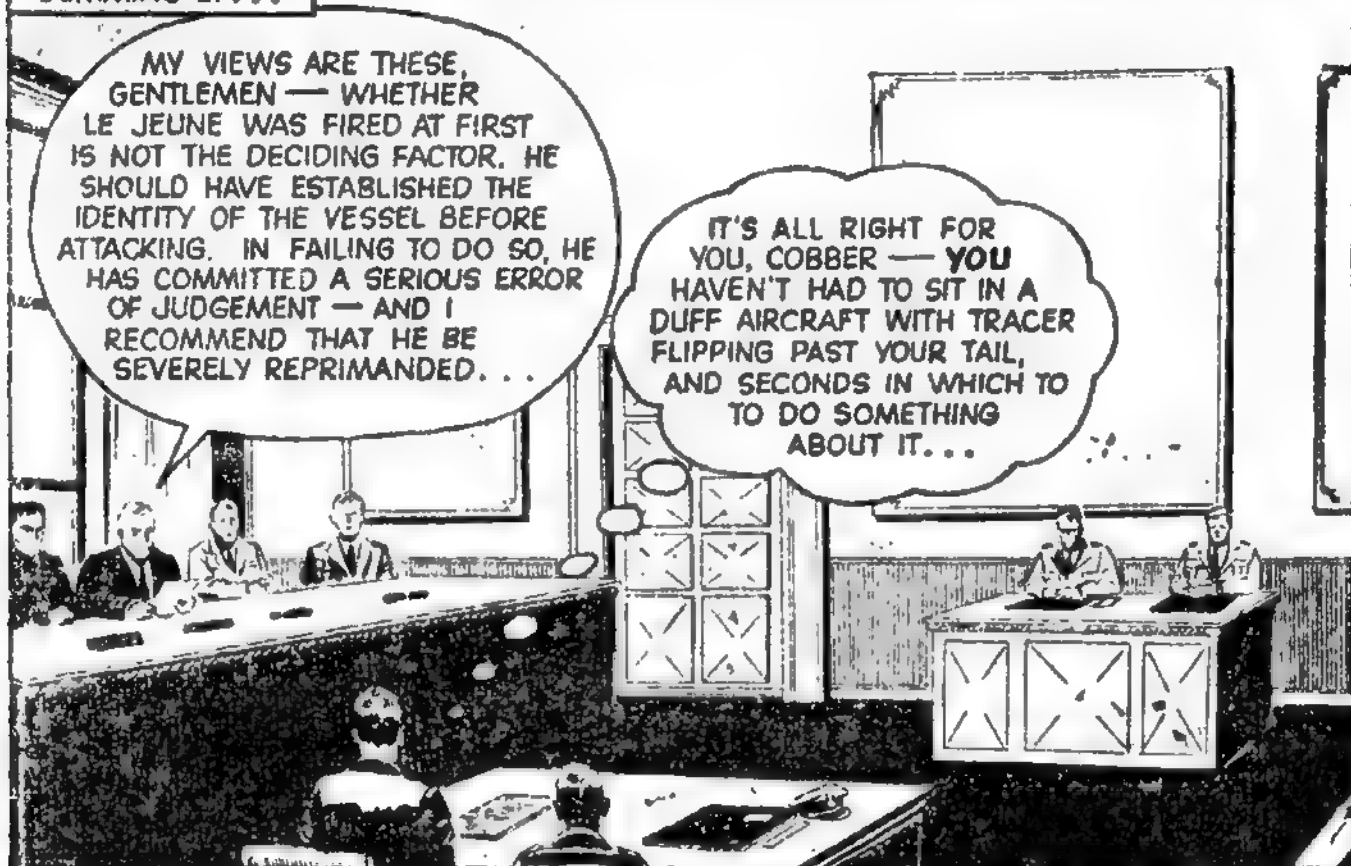
THE FACTS ABOUT THIS YOUNG MAN, LE JEUNE, ARE THESE — HE APPEARS TO HAVE SOME RESENTMENT AT THE FACT THAT HE CANNOT OBTAIN A TRANSFER TO SOME FAR-EASTERN SQUADRON. AS A RESULT, HE IS UNCO-OPERATIVE AND UNRELIABLE.

LET'S BE FAIR TO HIM, SIR — HIS COMMANDING OFFICER SAYS THAT HE IS AN EFFICIENT PILOT. HIS JUDGEMENT IS USUALLY GOOD.

HAWKINS SEEMS TO BE UNDULY INFLUENCED BY ANGER — AND FORSYTH'S EVIDENCE CAN'T BE DISREGARDED!



HALF AN HOUR LATER, LE JEUNE WAS RECALLED — AND THE PRESIDENT GAVE HIS SUMMING-UP...

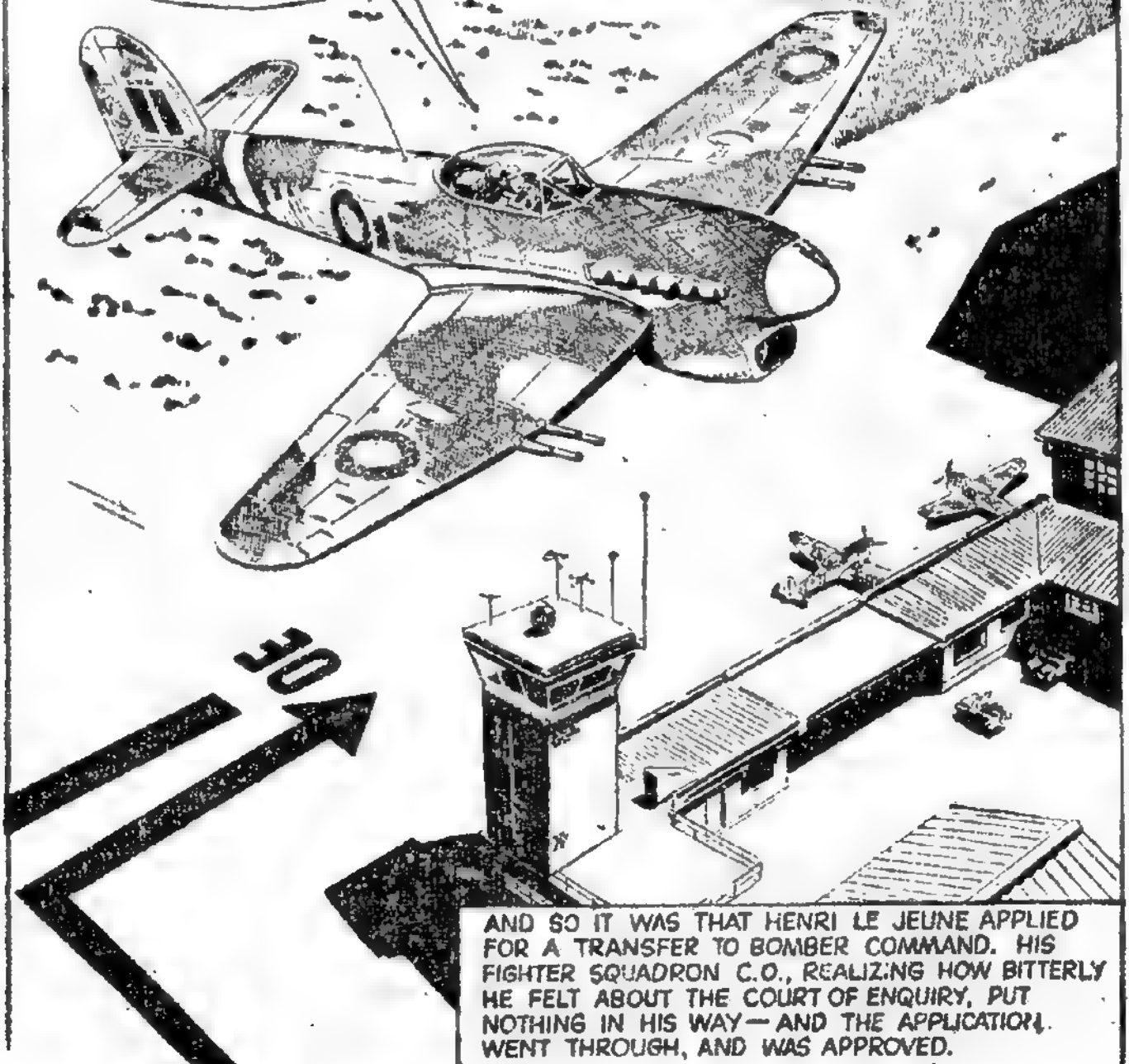


AS THEY LEFT THE COURTROOM, LE JEUNE'S C.O., FEELING SORRY FOR THE YOUNG AUSTRALIAN, TRIED TO SOFTEN THE BLOW.



SEETHING WITH RAGE, LE JEUNE GOT INTO FLYING KIT, AND TOOK HIS TYPHOON UP ON AIR TESTS.

I FEEL LIKE SHOOTING UP THE WHOLE ROTTEN BUNCH OF THEM DOWN THERE! HOWEVER, I'M NOT STAYING WITH THIS MOB MUCH LONGER—IT'S BOMBER COMMAND FOR ME, AS SOON AS I CAN GET A TRANSFER!



AND SO IT WAS THAT HENRI LE JEUNE APPLIED FOR A TRANSFER TO BOMBER COMMAND. HIS FIGHTER SQUADRON C.O., REALIZING HOW BITTERLY HE FELT ABOUT THE COURT OF ENQUIRY, PUT NOTHING IN HIS WAY—AND THE APPLICATION WENT THROUGH, AND WAS APPROVED.

Chapter 2. RETURN TO BASE

A FEW WEEKS LATER, LE JEUNE REPORTED TO A BOMBER COMMAND OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT. STANDING ON THE AIRFIELD PERIMETER ON HIS ARRIVAL, HE WATCHED A CLUMSY WELLINGTON LANDING AND TAKING OFF...



IN A FEW DAYS, LE JEUNE ASSEMBLED A CREW — AND UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AN INSTRUCTOR, HE TOOK A LADEN WELLINGTON INTO THE AIR FOR THE FIRST TIME. BUT FLYING A TWIN-ENGINE BOMBER WAS A VERY DIFFERENT THING FROM FLYING A HIGHLY MANOEUVRABLE FIGHTER, AS LE JEUNE SOON FOUND OUT...

WE TOOK OFF THAT TIME, LE JEUNE — BUT ONLY BECAUSE I WAS HERE TO LIFT THE FLAP LEVER, WHICH YOU OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T CONSIDER NECESSARY! YOU MUST DO A THOROUGH COCKPIT DRILL EVERY TIME BEFORE TAKE OFF — OR YOU WON'T LAST LONG!

YOU'LL GET USED TO ME, COBBER! I'M ALWAYS MAKING MISTAKES — ASK THE ADMIRALTY!



SOON THE TIME CAME FOR LE JEUNE'S FIRST SOLO WITH A WELLINGTON. LEFT ON HIS OWN, HE TOOK HER OFF THE GROUND AS IF SHE WERE A LIGHT AIRCRAFT AT THE END OF A JUNGLE AIRSTRIP....

FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE!
WHO IS THAT
MANIAC IN 'F' FOR
FREDDIE!

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?
THAT'S THE NEW AUSTRALIAN
PILOT, LE JEUNE! HE'S A FIGHTER
BOY WHO BLOTTED HIS COPYBOOK!
THE WAY HE FLIES, YOU'D
THINK HE HAD LIFE
INSURANCE...

WHEN THE WELLINGTON FINALLY SAILED IN TO A HEAVY LANDING, AND BRAKED ABRUPTLY AT THE END OF ITS RUN, LE JEUNE'S CREW WERE NOT ALTOGETHER ENTHUSIASTIC OVER THEIR NEW SKIPPER...

THERE HE GOES, WITHOUT
EVEN A WORD OF APOLOGY—
I WONDER IF ALL THE AUSSIES
ARE THE SAME!

DID YOU
FEEL THAT
LANDING? IT
SHOOK EVERY
BONE IN MY
BODY!

LUCKY FOR YOU
THAT YOU WEREN'T
UP FRONT — ME, I GOT
A GRANDSTAND VIEW OF
THAT LOT — AND BELIEVE
ME, IT WASN'T FUNNY!

AFTER A SERIES OF INCIDENTS, LE JEUNE WAS RIPE FOR A HIGH LEVEL TICKING OFF AND THE DAY CAME WHEN HE WAS SUMMONED TO THE C.O.'S OFFICE....



THE C.O. MADE GOOD HIS PROMISE — AND IN A FEW WEEKS LE JEUNE AND HIS CREW WERE PASSED AS QUALIFIED TO CONVERT ON TO FOUR-ENGINE BOMBERS, BEFORE BEING POSTED TO AN OPERATIONAL SQUADRON...



THE LANCASTER WAS REALLY A BEAUTIFUL MACHINE TO HANDLE—IT RESPONDED TO THE CONTROLS LIKE A THOROUGHbred, AND LE JEUNE IMMEDIATELY FELT AT EASE.

THE NEXT POINT IS THIS, LE JEUNE — YOU AND YOUR CREW MUST WORK TOGETHER ON FIRE CONTROL, UNTIL YOU CAN EVADE ANY FIGHTER ATTACK THAT'S THROWN AT YOU.

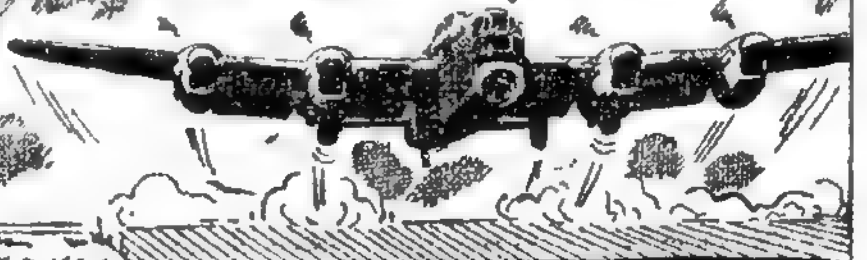
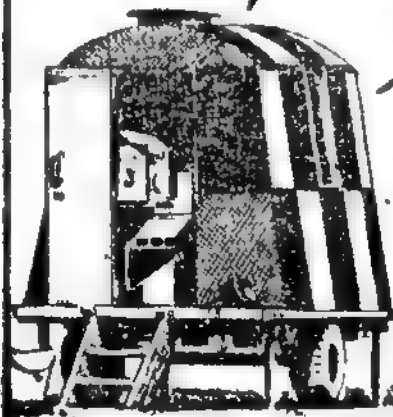
SURE THING, COBBER — WE'LL WORK A SYSTEM! THIS IS A FAR CRY FROM THE BUSH WHERE I WAS USED TO FLYING WITH THE SEAT OF MY PANTS!

— AND FLYING 'WITH THE SEAT OF MY PANTS' WAS AN INSTINCT WHICH LE JEUNE SIMPLY COULD NOT OVERCOME, EVEN WITH AN ENORMOUS MACHINE LIKE THE LANCASTER.

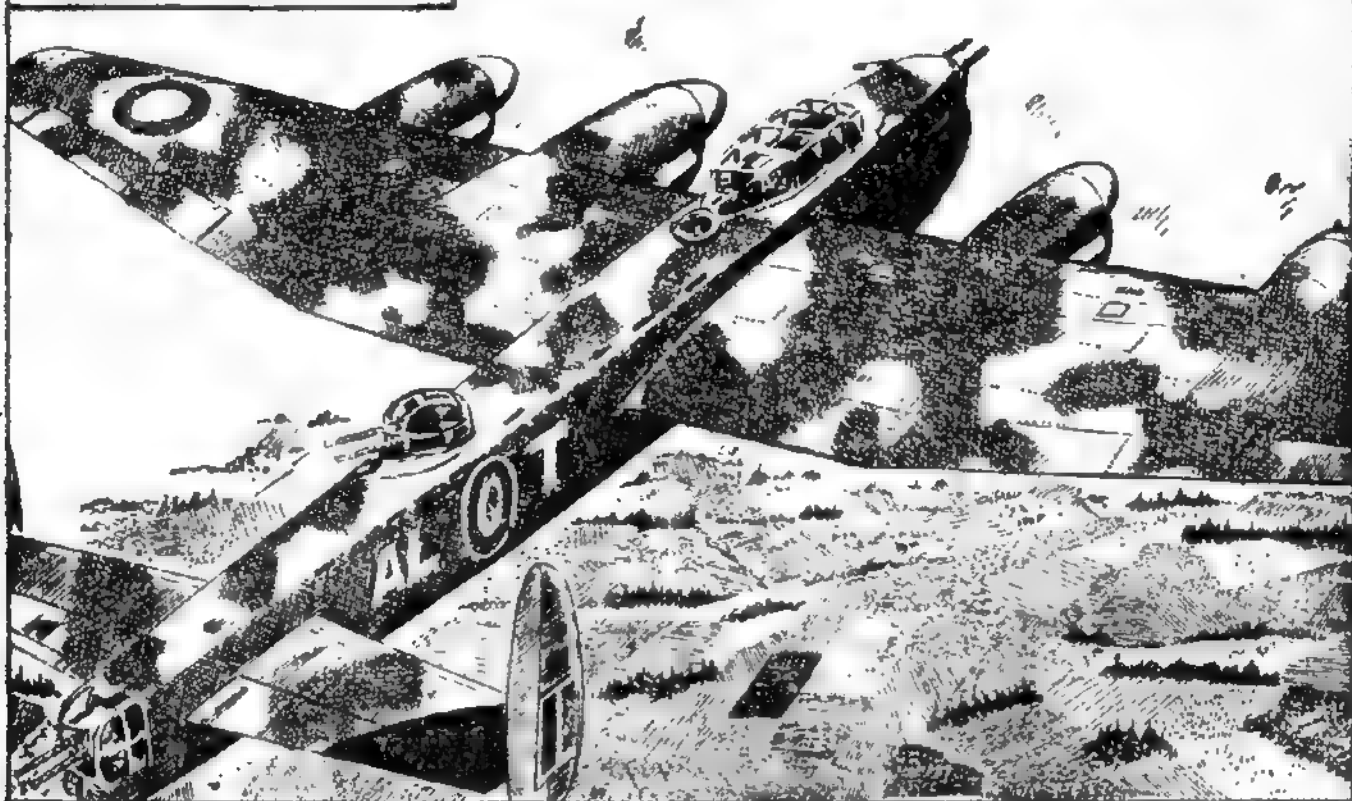
LOOK AT THAT — IF ANY OF HIS ENGINES CUT NOW HE MAY NEED THOSE WHEELS — AND YET HE'S ALREADY GOT THEM UP!

IT BEATS ME WHY HIS CREW STAY WITH HIM!

OKAY, FLIGHT ENGINEER — FULL POWER! LET'S SHOW THESE STUFF-SHIRTED INSTRUCTORS HOW TO FLY!



ALTHOUGH LE JEUNE FLEW LANCASTERS AS IF THEY WERE SPITFIRES, HIS UNCANNY FLYING JUDGEMENT GOT HIM THROUGH — AND, STRANGELY ENOUGH, HIS CREW SEEMED TO TAKE TO HIM.



THE INSTRUCTORS, REALISING THAT HE WAS MORE OF A 'NATURAL' THAN A 'BOOK' PILOT, SOON PASSED HIM WITH A SIGH AS FIT FOR OPERATIONS — AND HE WAS POSTED TO HIS NEW SQUADRON. . . .

THE NAME IS FLIGHT
LIEUTENANT LE JEUNE, SIR—
REPORTING FOR DUTY!

AH, YES, I'VE HEARD
ABOUT YOU! CLOBBERS
AN M.T.B., AND DID YOUR BEST
TO PRANG HALF A DOZEN
WELLINGTONS AND A LANC— IT'S
ALL IN THE DOSSIER HERE, MY BOY!
BUT CHEER UP — AS LONG AS
YOU KEEP YOUR MIND ON THE
JOB, AND DROP YOUR QUOTA
OF H.E. ON THE TARGET,
I'LL BE PERFECTLY
HAPPY!



WITH SOME EXCITEMENT, LE JEUNE AND HIS CREW ASSEMBLED WITH THE OTHER CREWS FOR BRIEFING BEFORE THEIR FIRST OPERATIONAL TRIP....



THE TARGET FOR TONIGHT IS ESSEN! THE HUN HAVE AN EXPERIMENTAL EXPLOSIVES FACTORY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY — THEY HAVE STARTED FULL SCALE PRODUCTION, AND ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THE FIRST CONSIGNMENT LEAVES TOMORROW MORNING! THIS TARGET MUST BE DESTROYED AT ALL COSTS!

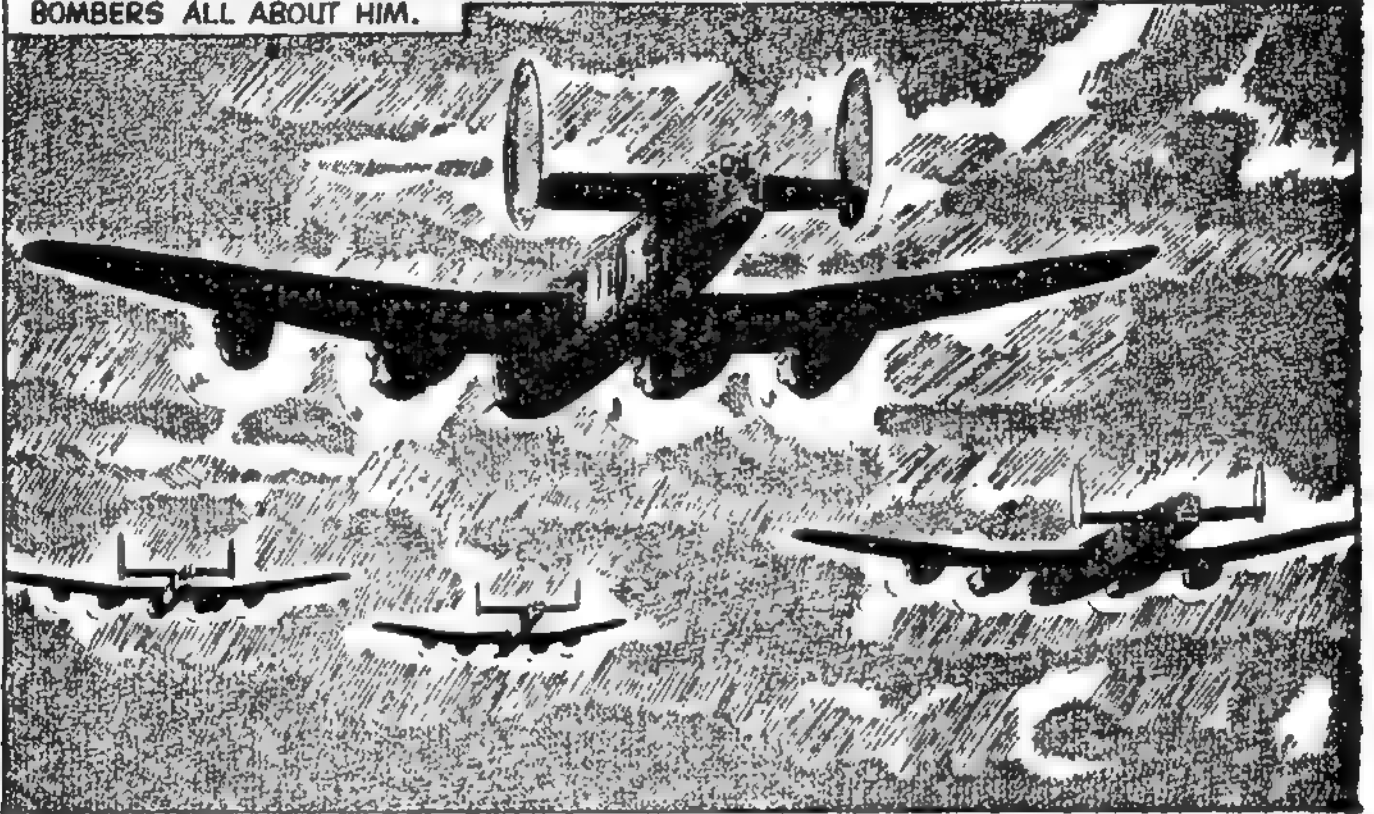
LATE THAT NIGHT THE SQUADRON ROARED OFF INTO THE SKY, EACH LANCASTER LABOURING UNDER A LOAD OF TWELVE TONS OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE AND INCENDIARY BOMBS....

"ONCE A JOLLY SWABMAN WAITING WHILE HIS BILLY BOILED UN-DER THE SHADE OF A GOOLEBAR TREE..."



AW, SKIPPER — SAVE IT TILL WE'VE DROPPED OUR LOAD! THE VIBRATION MIGHT SET SOMETHING OFF!

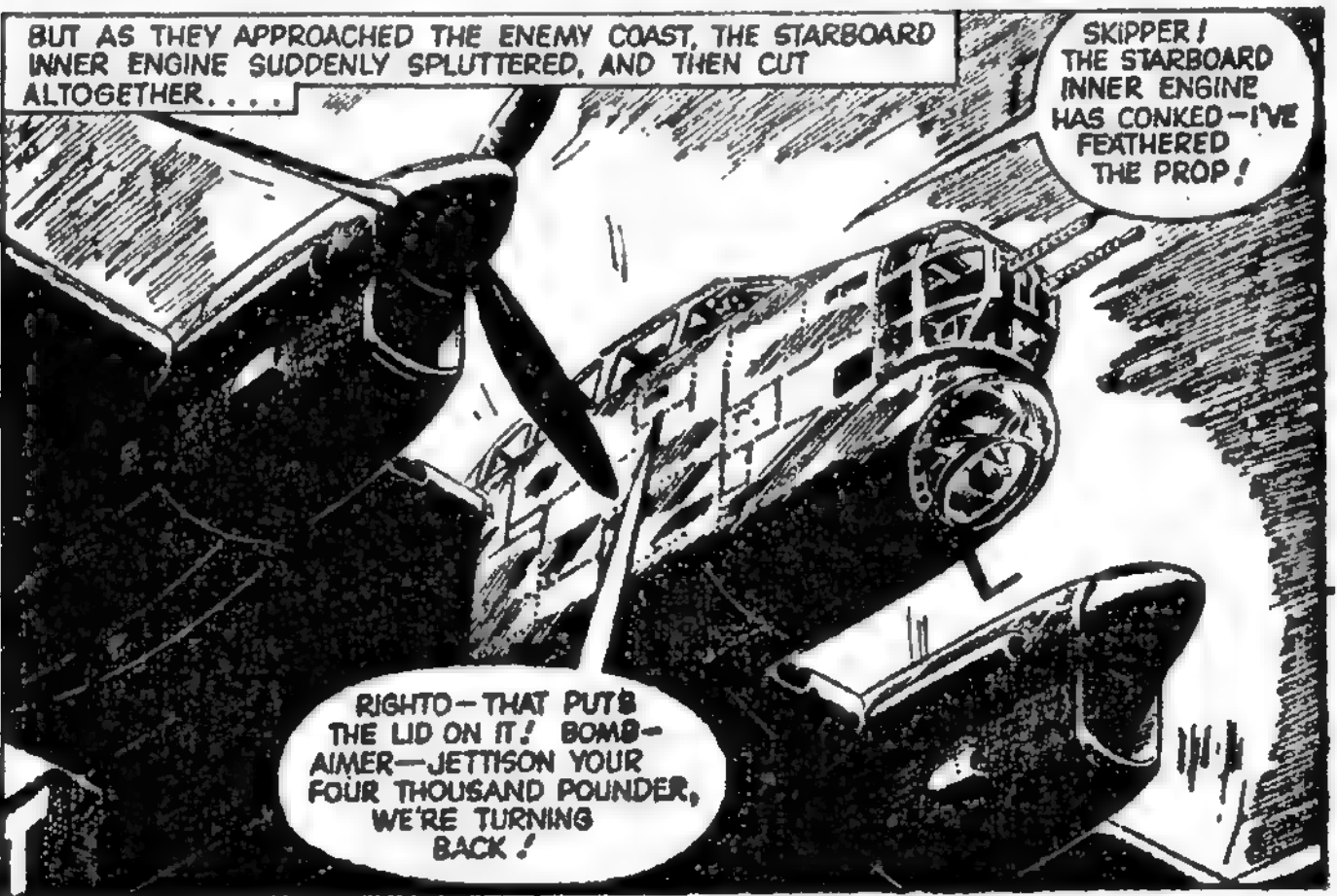
CLIMBING TO 20,000 FEET, LE JEUNE SET THE THUNDERING LANCASTER ON COURSE FOR THE SQUADRON RENDEZVOUS OVER THE EAST COAST. WITHIN AN HOUR HE WAS HEADING ACROSS THE NORTH SEA FOR DISTANT ESSEN WITH THE DIM SHAPES OF OTHER BOMBERS ALL ABOUT HIM.



BUT AS THEY APPROACHED THE ENEMY COAST, THE STARBOARD INNER ENGINE SUDDENLY SPLUTTERED, AND THEN CUT ALTOGETHER. . . .

SKIPPER!
THE STARBOARD
INNER ENGINE
HAS CONKED—I'VE
FEATHERED
THE PROP!

RIGHTO—THAT PUTS
THE LID ON IT! BOMB-
AIMER—JETTISON YOUR
FOUR THOUSAND POUNDER,
WE'RE TURNING
BACK!



PUZZLEMENT AND SURPRISE WERE MINGLED IN THE PROTESTING VOICE OF THE FLIGHT ENGINEER.



BACK AT BASE, THE SQUADRON COMMANDER HAD SEEN THE SQUADRON OFF ON THEIR MISSION — AND NOW HE PACED UP AND DOWN ON THE BALCONY OF THE FLYING CONTROL TOWER, AWAITING THEIR RETURN. SUDDENLY HE STOPPED — AND LISTENED.



THE FLYING CONTROL OFFICER WAS RIGHT. A SOLITARY LANCASTER WAS SOON DRONING OVER THE AIRFIELD — AND A LITTLE WHILE LATER, LE JEUNE'S T FOR TOMMY HAD TOUCHED DOWN AND RUMBLED ROUND THE PERIMETER TRACK TO DISPERSAL. HIS CREW SAT GRIMLY SILENT AS THE CREW BUS TOOK THEM TO THE OPS ROOM. . . .



THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER TURNED TO THE CREW OF THE BOMBER, WHO HAD LISTENED SILENTLY TO LE JEUNE'S REPORT.



THE C.O. HAD NOTHING TO SAY—FOR LE JEUNE WAS TECHNICALLY WITHIN HIS RIGHTS. HE DISMISSED THE BOMBER CREW—BUT AS HE WALKED BACK TO THE CONTROL TOWER WITH THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, HE EXCHANGED A FEW VIEWS....



THE NEXT DAY AT THE MESS, WORD ABOUT LE JEUNE'S FAULTY ENGINE HAD GOT AROUND—AND HE FOUND HIMSELF COLD-SHOULDERED.



Chapter 3. MINING TRIP

THAT DAY ORDERS CAME THROUGH FROM GROUP H.Q., FOR TWO AIRCRAFT TO CARRY OUT URGENT MINE-LAYING OPERATIONS IN THE ESTUARY OF THE RIVER GARONNE IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE. IN THE CONTROL ROOM, THE C.O. DISCUSSED THE MISSION WITH SQUADRON-LEADER JACKSON, THE FLYING CONTROL OFFICER.



WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 41 RED CROSS OF COURAGE No. 42 PHANTOM FORCE FIVE
No. 43 THREE-TWO-ONE-ZERO!

ALSO ON SALE NOW

MINE-LAYING—OR 'GARDENING'—WAS A VERY HAZARDOUS MISSION. TO DROP MINES, A HEAVY AIRCRAFT LIKE A LANCASTER HAD TO COME DOWN TO 50 FEET, AND KEEP ON A STEADY COURSE TOWARDS A SPECIAL PIN-POINT. THIS MADE IT A PARTICULARLY EASY TARGET FOR LIGHT FLAK, AND A SITTING DUCK FOR ANY NIGHT-FIGHTERS IN THE VICINITY. . . .

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY, CHAPS—ESPECIALLY YOU, LE JEUNE, AS THIS IS YOUR FIRST GARDENING TRIP! THESE MINES **MUST** BE LAID TONIGHT! THE WEATHER WILL BE ABSOLUTELY ROTTEN—AND IF IT CLEARS AT ALL, THERE'LL BE BRIGHT MOONLIGHT. IT'S GOING TO BE NO PICNIC. . . .



WHEN MINES WERE DROPPED, THEIR EXACT POSITION HAD TO BE PLOTTED, SO THAT IF NECESSARY—AFTER THE WAR—THEY COULD BE SWEEPED, TO CLEAR LANES FOR SHIPPING. THIS MEANT THAT THE NAVIGATION, PIN-POINTING OF THE TARGET, AND TIMING OF THE DROP, HAD TO BE GAUGED PRECISELY. . . .

...WE'LL CROSS THE CHERBOURG PENINSULA AT TWENTY THOUSAND FEET. FIFTY MILES FROM BORDEAUX WE'LL START LOSING HEIGHT UNTIL WE HIT THE PROMONTORY AT THE MOUTH OF THE GARONNE. WE'LL DO A TIMED RUN FROM THE PROMONTORY, AND THEN COME ROUND AGAIN AND DROP THE MINES! ALL CLEAR? ANY QUESTIONS?

WHAT DO WE DO, SIR, IF THE VISIBILITY CLAMPS DOWN SO BAD THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE ESTUARY OR ANYTHING ELSE?



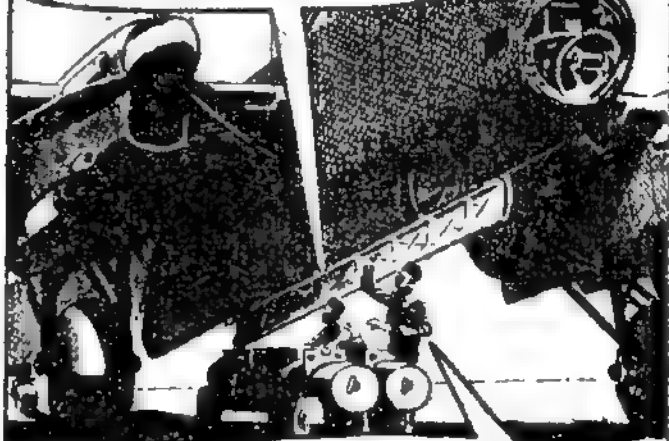
THE C.O.'S LIPS TWISTED IN A HUMOURLESS SMILE.

IN THAT CASE, LE JEUNE, I'LL PASS THE CONTROLS TO YOU—AND YOU CAN LEAD ME TO THE DROPPING AREA WITH THE SEAT OF YOUR PANTS!



AS THE C.O.'S SECOND PILOT, LE JEUNE ACCOMPANIED HIM ON HIS INSPECTION OF THE AIRCRAFT BEFORE TAKE-OFF—AND THE C.O. TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO A LITTLE TESTING OF MORAL FIBRE...

WELL, THERE THEY ARE, LE JEUNE—SIX OF THE WICKEDEST CONTRAPTIONS DESIGNED BY MAN! IF ONE SPLINTER OF FLAK HITS THEM, WE'LL GO UP LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE!



REMIND ME, SIR, TO TELL YOU SOMETIME ABOUT HOW I HAD TO MAKE A LANDING IN MY TYPHOON WITH A THOUSAND POUNDER ABOARD.

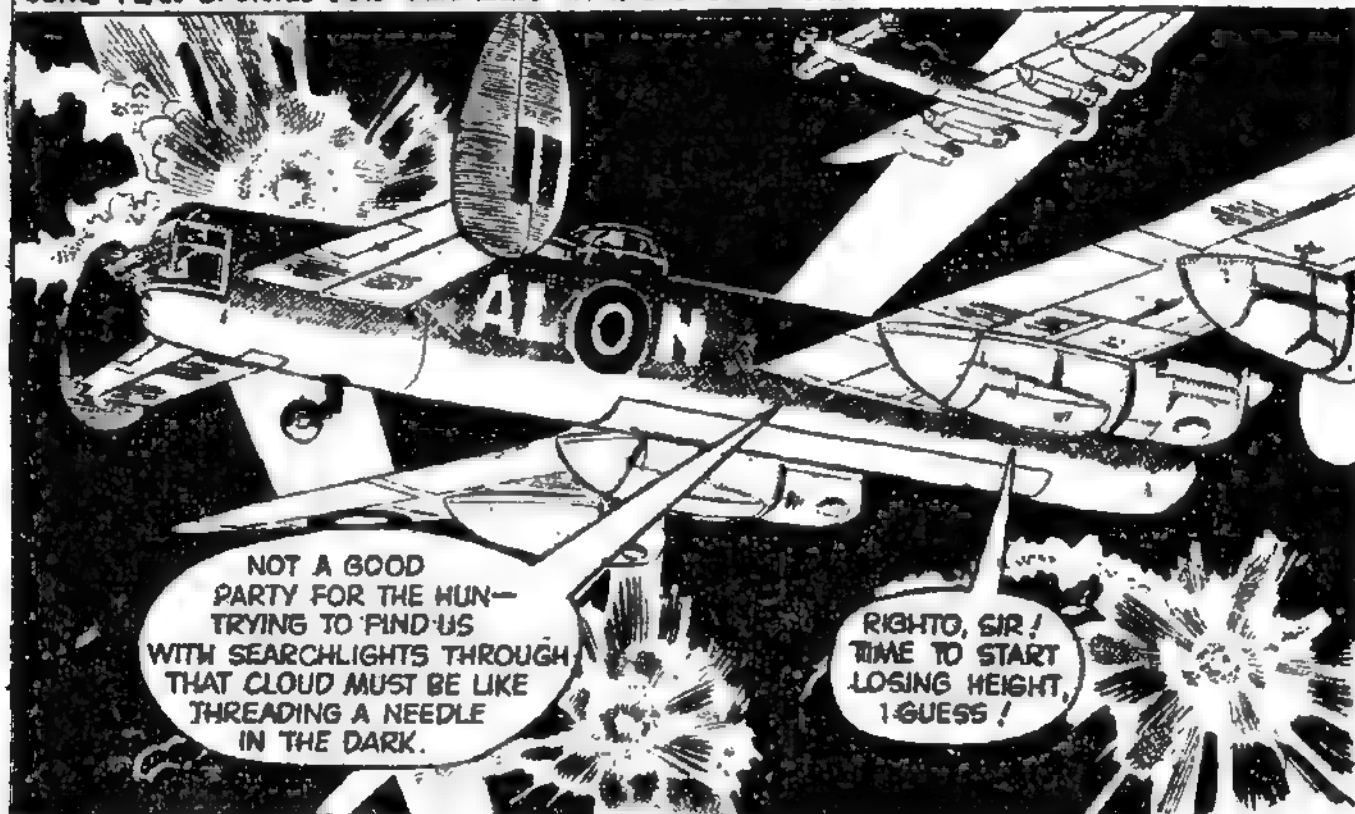
IT WAS TOWARDS DUSK WHEN THE TWO LANCASTERS TOOK OFF INTO THE TEETH OF A HOWLING GALE. SHEETS OF DRIVING RAIN CURTAINED THE LINCOLNSHIRE FENS...



LOVELY WEATHER FOR THE DUCKS, LE JEUNE! WE WON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT NIGHT FIGHTERS. IF IT'S LIKE THIS ALL THE WAY TO CHERBOURG! TROUBLE IS, IF IT GETS A LITTLE BIT ROUGHER, THE MINES MIGHT COME ADRIFT AND BUMP TOGETHER—AND THEN...

TOO RIGHT, SIR! NOT QUITE SO BAD, THOUGH, AS THAT NIGHT WHEN I FLEW SOME DYNAMITE OVER A VOLCANO IN NEW ZEALAND...

THREE HOURS LATER THE TWO LANCASTERS WERE CROSSING THE CHERBOURG PENINSULA AT 20,000 FEET. AN OCCASIONAL SEARCHLIGHT PROBED THROUGH BROKEN CLOUDS—AND SOME FLAK SPURTED AND FLICKERED IN THE STORMY SKY.



THE MINE-LADEN BOMBERS SANK DOWN AND DOWN, GRADUALLY NEARING THE TARGET AREA.

JUDGING FROM OUR BEARINGS AT CHERBOURG, WE'RE DEAD ON COURSE—QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT IN THIS WEATHER! ONCE WE SIGHT THE PROMONTORY, WE GO IN FOR A TIMED RUN AT FIVE HUNDRED FEET. THEN WE COME ROUND AGAIN FOR THE REAL THING! ALL OF YOU KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!



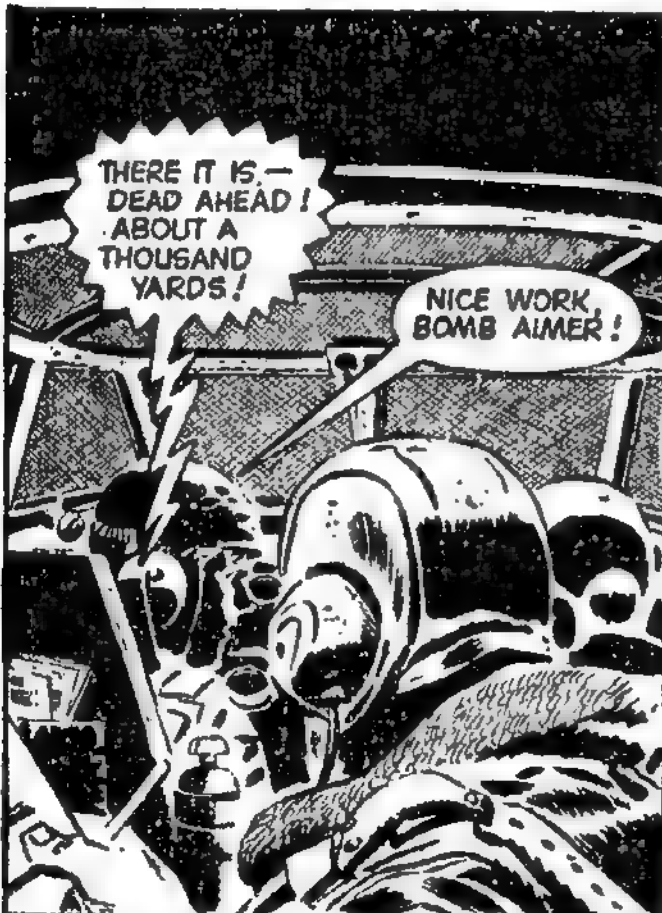
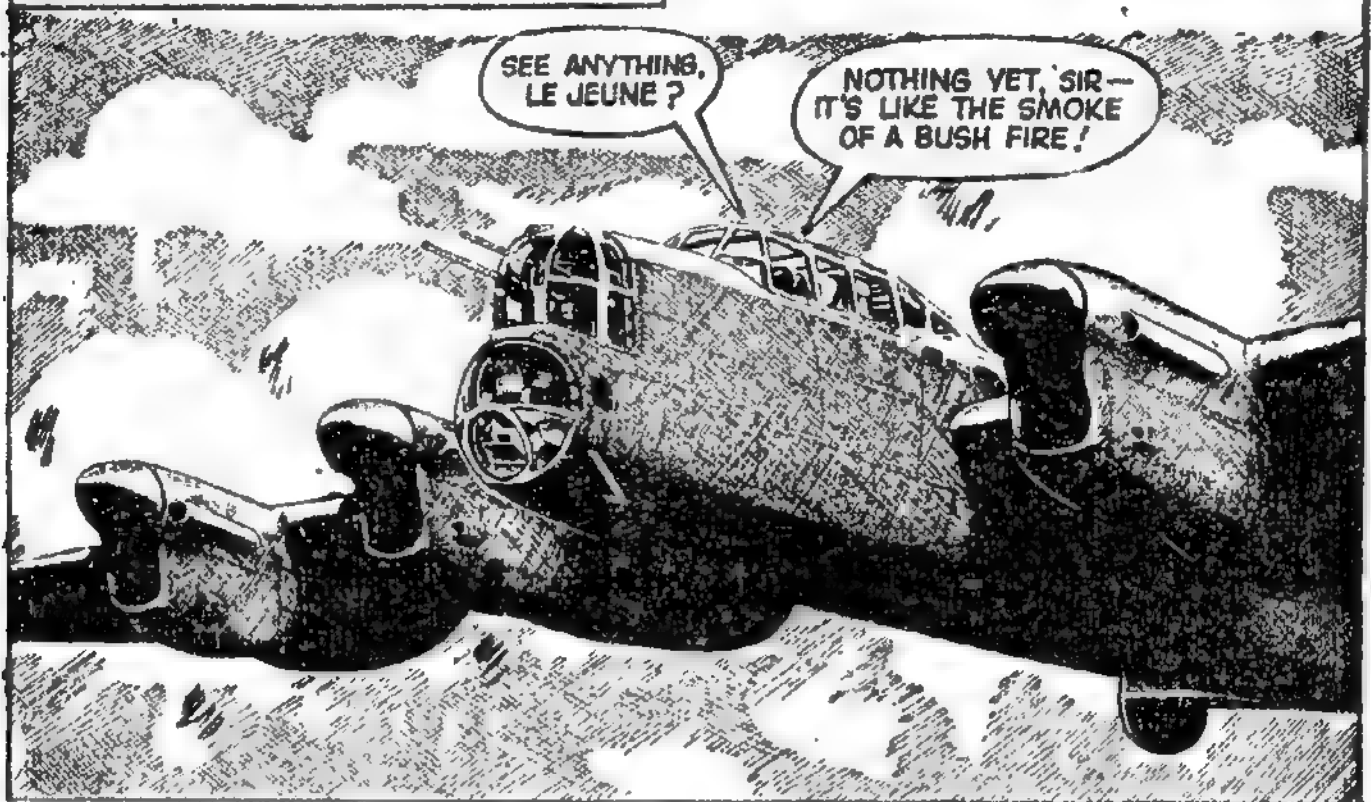
IT WAS A WILD NIGHT IN THE ESTUARY OF THE GARONNE — AND THE CREWS OF THE GUN EMPLACEMENTS ON THE PROMONTORY, THOUGH ALERTED BECAUSE OF THE IMPENDING MOVEMENTS OF THE NAZI CRUISER *PRINZ EUGEN*, WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE WEATHER THAN WITH ANY POSSIBLE ACTIVITY ON THE PART OF THE ENEMY. . .



FAR OUT ON THE GARONNE ESTUARY, A FLAK SHIP WALLOWED IN HEAVY SEAS. THE ELECTRICAL DISTURBANCE OF THE STORM RENDERED ITS RADAR ALMOST USELESS — AND IT WAS SOME SHORT TIME BEFORE THE TWO TELL-TALE BLIPS COULD BE DISTINGUISHED AS TWO AIRCRAFT APPROACHING THE ESTUARY AT A LOW ALTITUDE. . .



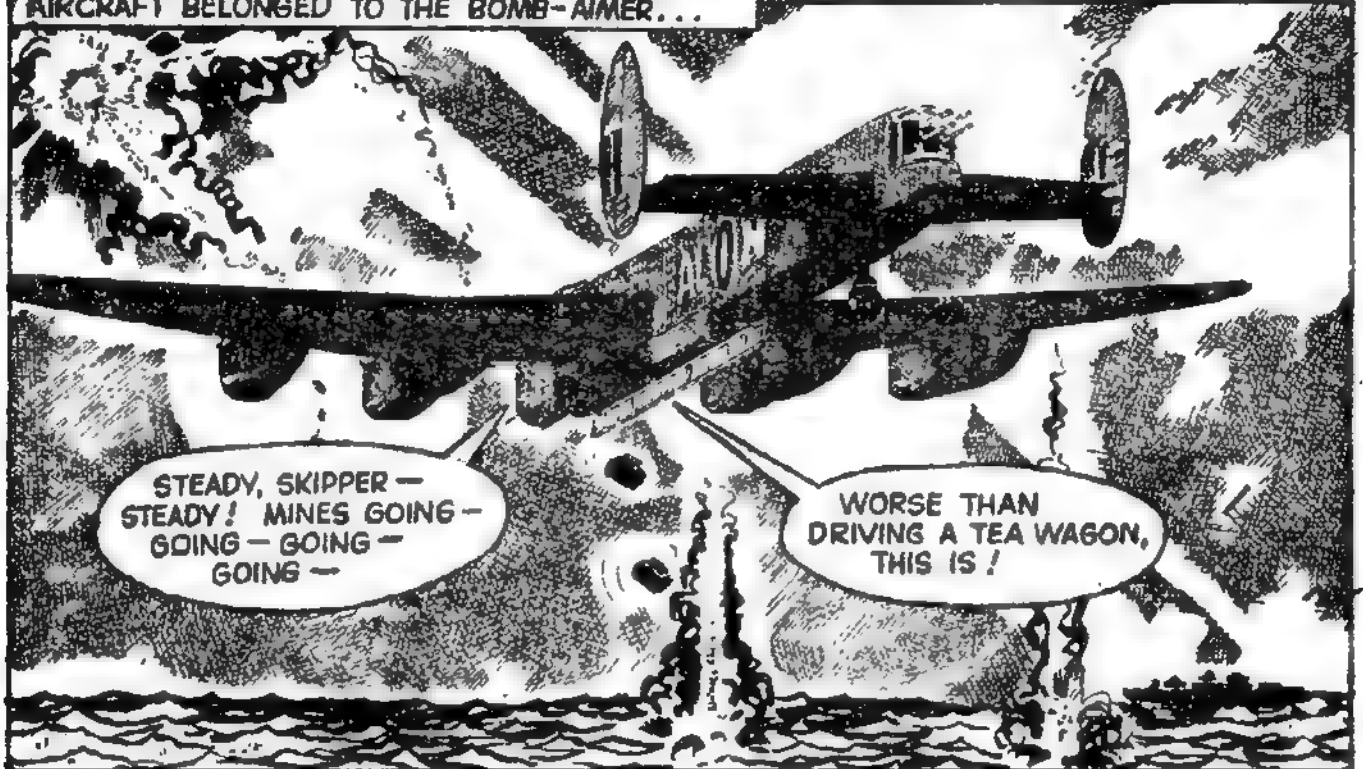
THUNDERING THROUGH THE SWIRLING MISTS, THE LEADING LANCASTER APPROACHED THE TARGET AREA. EACH MEMBER OF THE CREW PEERED ANXIOUSLY INTO THE NIGHT, SEARCHING FOR THE PROMONTORY....



AS THE GREAT FOUR-ENGINE BOMBER SWEEPED LOW OVER THE PIN-POINT, SPASMODIC STREAMS OF FLAK AND TRACER WENT SUDDENLY PAST. LE JEUNE SAW THE DARK MASS OF THE ISLAND DEAD AHEAD.



ON THE CLICK OF THE BOMB-AIMER'S STOP WATCH, THE C.O. BROUGHT THE LANCASTER ROUND IN A WIDE ARC. THEY CAME IN AGAIN OVER THE PROMONTORY—AND LE JEUNE WATCHED THE LIGHT FLAK FLICKER LOWER AND LOWER TOWARDS THEM ON ALL SIDES AS IT FELT FOR THEIR ALTITUDE. THEN THEY WERE OVER THE ESTUARY, AND THE WHOLE AIRCRAFT BELONGED TO THE BOMB-AIMER...



AS THE LAST MINE DROPPED INTO THE ESTUARY WATERS, THE LANCASTER RAISED ITS GREAT NOSE SKYWARD AND CLIMBED HIGH OVER THE FAR SIDE OF THE ESTUARY IN A STEEP TURN.



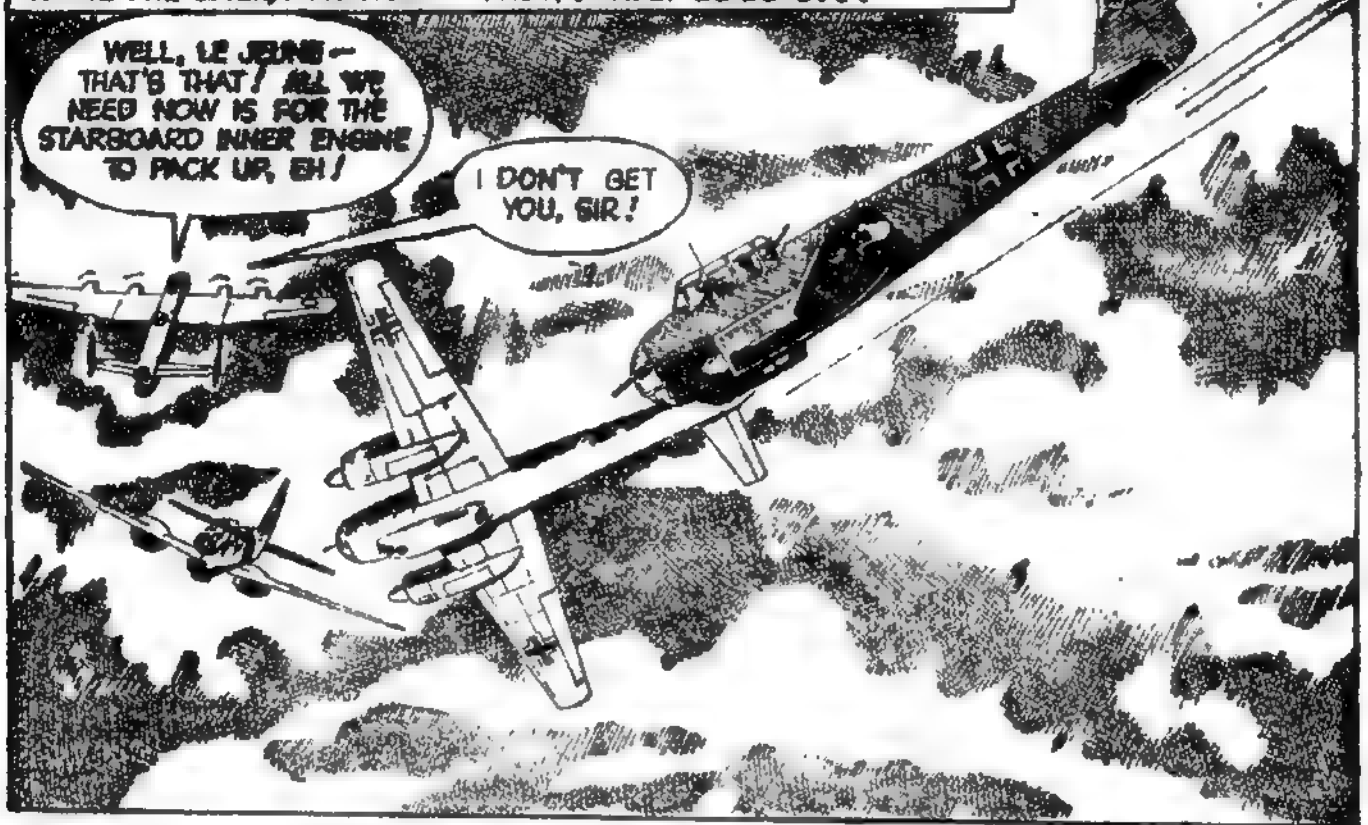
WITH A SUDDEN RATTLE, A STREAM OF CANNON SHELLS TORE THROUGH THE CABIN WALLS, A YARD BEHIND LE JEUNE'S HEAD...



THEY BEGAN A LONG CLIMBING TURN TOWARDS CHERBOURG AT 5,000 FEET, STILL CLIMBING THROUGH SCUDDING CLOUDS... AND THEN CAME THE ENEMY FIGHTERS— FAST, DEADLY JU 88'S...

WELL, LE JEUNE— THAT'S THAT! ALL WE NEED NOW IS FOR THE STARBOARD INNER ENGINE TO PACK UP, EH!

I DON'T GET YOU, SIR!

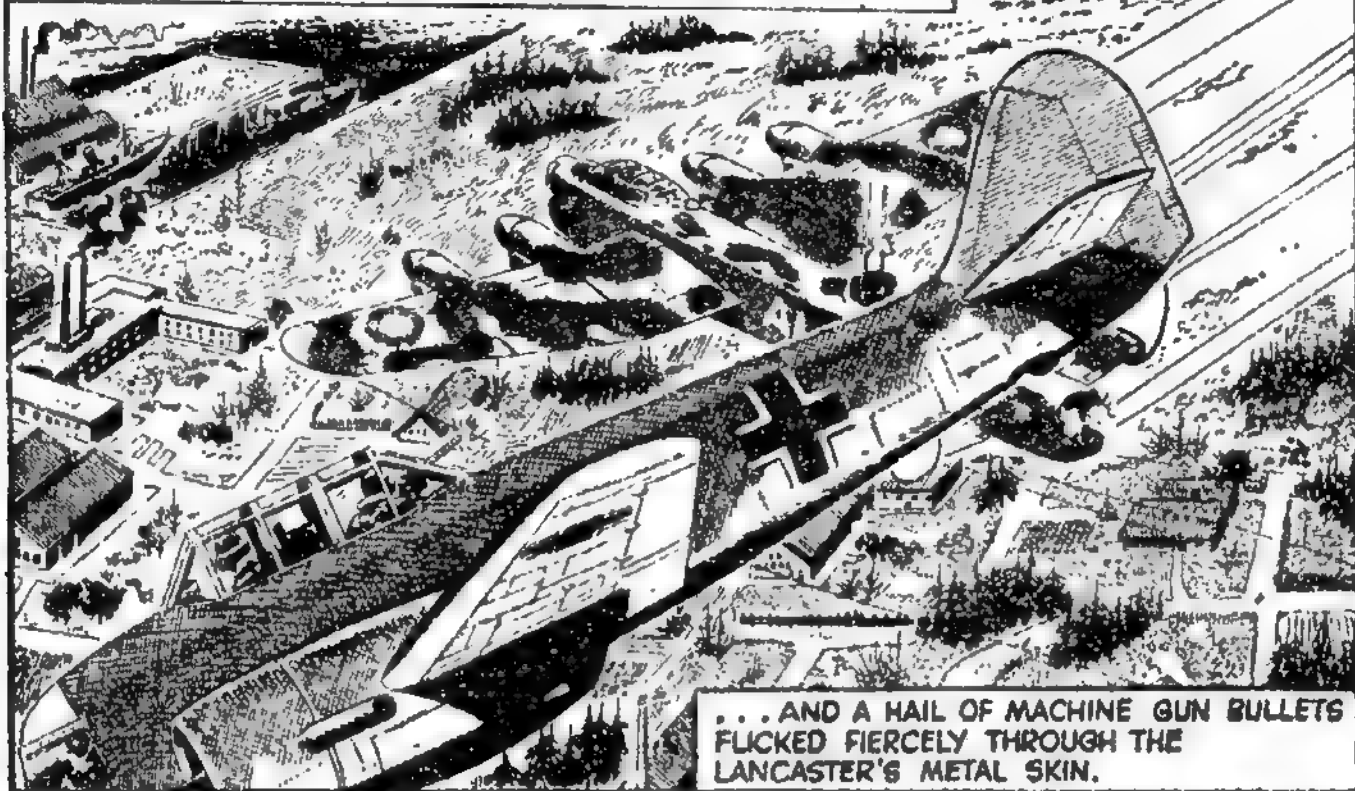


THE LANCASTER HAD HIT BIG TROUBLE...



CRUIKEY, SKIPPER! FIGHTERS— EIGHT OF THEM! EIGHT HUNDRED YARDS— SEVEN HUNDRED! DIVE TO PORT— GO!

THE LANCASTER SHUDDERED INTO A TIGHT DIVE TO PORT. BUT ALTHOUGH THE C.O. STOOD ON THE LEFT RUDDER WITH ALL HIS WEIGHT, THE LAST FOUR ATTACKING JUNKERS WERE ABLE TO CORRECT THEIR DIVES AND FOLLOW HIM ROUND....



... AND A HAIL OF MACHINE GUN BULLETS FLICKED FIERCELY THROUGH THE LANCASTER'S METAL SKIN.

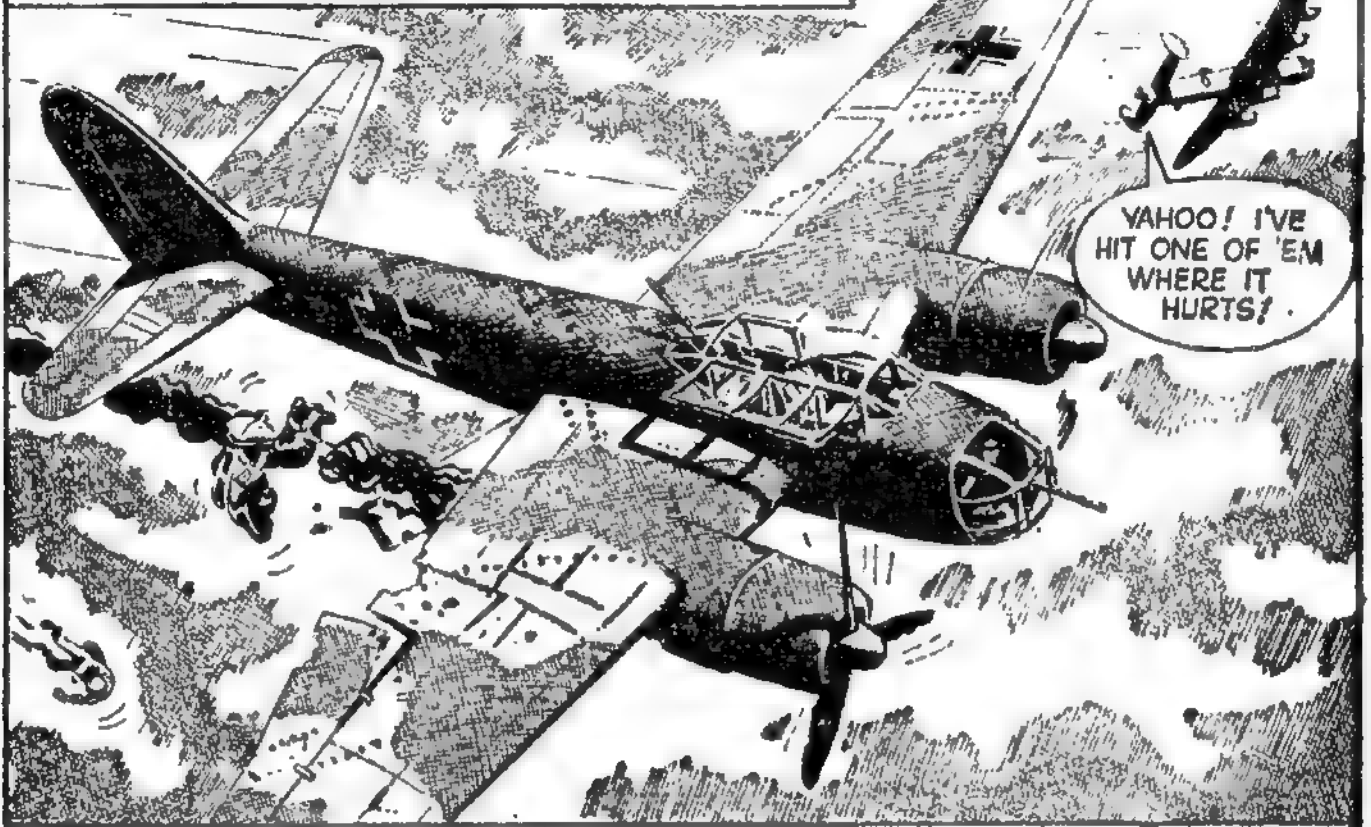
THE C.O.'S FACE WENT SUDDENLY GREY....

LE JEUNE... I'VE HAD IT... REACH THAT CLOUD... WE'LL LOSE THEM...

RIGHTO, SIR! I'M TAKING OVER!



AS LE JEUNE FELT THE BIG AIRCRAFT ANSWER TO HIS HANDS ON THE CONTROLS, AN EXULTANT SHOUT CAME FROM THE REAR GUNNER.



YAHOO! I'VE HIT ONE OF 'EM WHERE IT HURTS!

WITH THE AIRSPEED INDICATOR NEEDLE QUIVERING AT 500 KNOTS, THE LANCASTER GAINED THE SANCTUARY OF THE CLOUDS...



ATTENTION EVERYBODY—
THE OLD MAN'S PASSED OUT
WITH A SHOULDER WOUND!
I'M TAKING OVER THE CONTROLS
—LET'S HOPE WE'VE SHAKEN
OFF JERRY!

LE JEUNE COAXED THE LANCASTER UPWARDS TO CLIMB ABOVE THE CLOUDS—BUT, WITH TWO ENGINES BULLET-RIDDLED AND SHOWING RAPIDLY SINKING OIL PRESSURE, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO DO MORE THAN MAINTAIN HIS ALREADY EXISTING HEIGHT. AFTER HALF AN HOUR OF SKILFUL WRESTLING WITH THE CONTROLS, HE ASKED THE NAVIGATOR FOR A FIX...

... I RECKON WE'RE SOMEWHERE OVER THE BRISTOL CHANNEL, SIR — BUT THAT'S ONLY AN APPROXIMATION!

RIGHTO, NAVIGATOR! WIRELESS OP— CAN YOU TUNE IN FOR A Q.H.F.? I'LL HAVE TO DO A DESCENT THROUGH CLOUD, BUT I MUST HAVE WIRELESS ASSISTANCE!

SORRY, SKIP — THE R.T.'S GONE FOR A BURTON — SHOT TO PIECES!

TO DESCEND THROUGH CLOUD WITH WIRELESS ASSISTANCE WAS NORMALLY AN EXCEEDINGLY TRICKY MANOEUVRE — TO DO IT IN A DAMAGED LANCASTER WITHOUT WIRELESS AID WAS ASKING FOR TROUBLE OF THE WORST KIND. IN FACT, IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN — AND IN SUCH AN EMERGENCY AIRCREWS MUST BALE OUT...

FELLERS, THE OLD MAN HAS CONKED, AND COULDN'T MAKE A PARACHUTE DESCENT — SO I'M TAKING THIS OLD BUS DOWN THROUGH TEN-TENTHS CLOUD WITHOUT WIRELESS AID! ANYBODY WHO PREFERS TO BALE OUT HAS MY PERMISSION!

OKAY, SKIP — WE'RE WITH YOU! IF YOU SURVIVE TO GET COURT-MARTIALLED, WE'LL RESIGN THE SERVICE IN PROTEST!

THE LANCASTER SWEPT ON THROUGH
ENDLESS CLOUD AND MIST. IN THE
LIGHTED COCKPIT, THE ALTIMETER NEEDLE
CREPT LOWER AND LOWER... 1500 FEET...
1200 FEET... 900 FEET... 500 FEET...
WITH SWEAT TRICKLING DOWN HIS
FOREHEAD, LE JEUNE PEERED TENSELY INTO
THE SWIRLING OBSCURITY OUTSIDE THE
CABIN.



SUDDENLY —



A CHURCH STEEPLE SWEEPED PAST THEIR STARBOARD WING-TIP...

OKAY, LADS! CRASH
POSITIONS — AND FINGERS
CROSSED! I'M TAKING
HER IN TO LAND!



WITH A RUMBLING ROAR, THE LANCASTER, ITS UNDERCARRIAGE STILL RAISED, SKIDDED INTO A PLOUGHED FIELD, AT A SPEED OF MORE THAN A HUNDRED KNOTS. CROUCHING LOW IN THE SHUDDERING CABIN, LE JEUNE CUT THE ENGINE SWITCHES TO REDUCE THE CHANCE OF FIRE...

WE'RE DOWN —
GET READY FOR A
HURRIED EXIT IN CASE SHE
TURNS OVER! I'LL
TAKE CARE OF THE
SKIPPER!

AND THAT WAS THE END OF LE JEUNE'S FIRST MINING TRIP—LATER LOGGED AS "OPERATION SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT". AFTER SEEING HIS C.O. SAFELY TO HOSPITAL, LE JEUNE RETURNED TO HIS SQUADRON AND MADE A FULL REPORT TO THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER. AMONG THE THINGS HE LEARNED WAS THAT THE OTHER LANCASTER HAD NOT RETURNED. THEN HE WENT ON A WEEK'S WELL-EARNED LEAVE. IN HIS ABSENCE, THE WHEELS OF OFFICIALDOM WERE TURNING—AND HE GOT BACK TO THE SQUADRON TO FIND THAT THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS WERE ONCE AGAIN ABOUT TO BE KICKED FAIRLY AND SQUARELY BY THE POWERS THAT BE.

Chapter 4.

A NEW ENEMY

THE NEWS WAS BROKEN
BY THE ADJUTANT....

SORRY, LE JEUNE — BUT GROUP NAVIGATION
LEADER HAS ORDERED ME TO PUT YOU UNDER
OPEN ARREST PENDING COURT MARTIAL!

WHAT...?

AN EMBARRASSED FLUSH REDDENED THE ADJUTANT'S CHEEKS....

THE CHARGE WILL BE THAT YOU DESCENDED
THROUGH CLOUD WITHOUT WIRELESS. THE
PITY IS THAT IF YOU'D GONE ON FOR ONLY
A LITTLE LONGER THE CLOUD WOULD
HAVE CLEARED, AND
YOU'D HAVE MADE
BASE QUITE
EASILY.

OKAY! OKAY! IF
THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE
TO DISH UP JUST SERVE IT
TO ME! IT'S ALWAYS THIS
COBBER THAT CATCHES IT! MY
STARS—I'D GIVE MY RIGHT ARM TO
GET BACK ON A DECENT DYNAMITE
OR PETROL RUN IN GOOD OLD AUSSIE!

A COURT-MARTIAL WAS HASTILY CONVENED. THE PROSECUTING OFFICER WAS SQUADRON LEADER GREEN, A THREE-TOUR MAN FROM THE SAME SQUADRON AS LE JEUNE. HE HAD A TENDENCY TO DESPISE THE LESS-EXPERIENCED AND THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE 'LACK OF MORAL FIBRE' — AND LE JEUNE HAD A GOOD IDEA THAT GREEN WAS GOING TO GIVE IT TO HIM STRAIGHT IN THE NECK.

THE SINGLE POINT I WANT TO ESTABLISH IS THIS, FLYING OFFICER WILLIAMS — WAS LE JEUNE AWARE OF THE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES OF MAKING A DESCENT THROUGH TEN-TENTHS CLOUD WITHOUT WIRELESS?

HE CERTAINLY KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING, SIR — IN FACT WE ALL HAD IMPLICIT FAITH IN HIM — AND WHEN HE PROPOSED THAT WE BALE OUT, WE ELECTED TO STAY ON AND TAKE THE RISK!



IT SOON BECAME APPARENT TO EVERYONE IN COURT THAT SQUADRON LEADER GREEN WAS BEING PARTICULARLY VICIOUS IN HIS ATTACK ON THE UNFORTUNATE LE JEUNE, WHO HAD, BY ANY STANDARDS, DONE A FINE JOB IN LANDING AT ALL...

WHAT THIS RECKLESS YOUNG FOOL NEVER STOPPED TO CONSIDER WAS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THAT VILLAGE IF HIS MACHINE — TWELVE TONS OF METAL MOVING AT A HUNDRED KNOTS — HAD PLOUGHED INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT! WOMEN AND CHILDREN WOULD HAVE BEEN MURDERED IN THEIR BEDS —



WITH RESPECT, SIR, I'LL INTERRUPT HERE! NONE OF THESE THINGS DID HAPPEN — AND WE ARE HERE TO CONSIDER FACTS! I WISH SQUADRON LEADER GREEN WOULD STICK TO THE POINT!

THE CLIMAX OF THE COURT-MARTIAL WAS WHEN LE JEUNE'S C.O., PALE AND SHAKEN AFTER HIS ORDEAL, WAS HELPED INTO THE COURTROOM BY HOSPITAL STAFF...

I CAME HERE, SIR, FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF GIVING EVIDENCE FAVOURABLE TO LE JEUNE. HE BEHAVED ADMIRABLY IN A VERY TIGHT SITUATION—IN FACT I OWE MY LIFE TO HIM.



I WAS UNCONSCIOUS AND QUITE HELPLESS—AND HAD LE JEUNE GONE BY THE BOOK AND ORDERED A BALE-OUT HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO LEAVE ME TO GO DOWN WITH THE AIRCRAFT. HE IMPERILLED HIS OWN LIFE TO STICK BY ME. WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?

THANK YOU, WING COMMANDER. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WHAT YOU HAVE JUST SAID WILL BE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE.



ALL THE EVIDENCE WAS HEARD, AND THE CASE FOR BOTH SIDES WAS PUT — ON GREEN'S SIDE VEHEMENTLY, AND ON LE JEUNE'S SIDE CALMLY. FINALLY, LE JEUNE HEARD THE COURT'S VERDICT.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT LE JEUNE! THE COURT FINDS YOU GUILTY OF THIS BREACH OF KING'S REGULATIONS! HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE TECHNICAL NATURE OF THIS OFFENCE, AND THE EXEMPLARY WAY IN WHICH YOU HAVE ACTED, THE COURT IS CONFINING ITS SENTENCE TO A REPRIMAND. THAT IS ALL!

AS IF IT WEREN'T ENOUGH — TO BE STOOD UP IN FRONT OF THIS LOT AND TURNED INTO A COCONUT SHY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THAT SCREWBALL GREEN!



AND SO, ALTHOUGH LE JEUNE WAS COURT-MARTIALLED AND REPRIMANDED, HE PASSED INTO THE ROUGH-AND-READY FELLOWSHIP OF THE BOMBER SQUADRON WITH FLYING COLOURS — FOR HIS FELLOW PILOTS NOW KNEW THAT HE WAS A BRAVE MAN AND A GOOD FLYER.



BLESS 'EM ALL!
BLESS 'EM ALL!
THE LONG AND THE
SHORT AND THE
TALL...

BUT LE JEUNE'S BITTERNESS AGAINST THE R.A.F. STILL REMAINED - FOR IT SEEMED THAT HE WOULD NEVER GET A CHANCE TO FLY IN THE FAR EAST. AS THE MONTHS PASSED, AND HE BECAME A SEASONED BOMBER PILOT, FLYING MISSION AFTER MISSION, HE STILL CARRIED HIS CHIP ON HIS SHOULDER - AND HE STILL KEPT FALLING FOUL OF ONE MAN - SQUADRON LEADER GREEN.

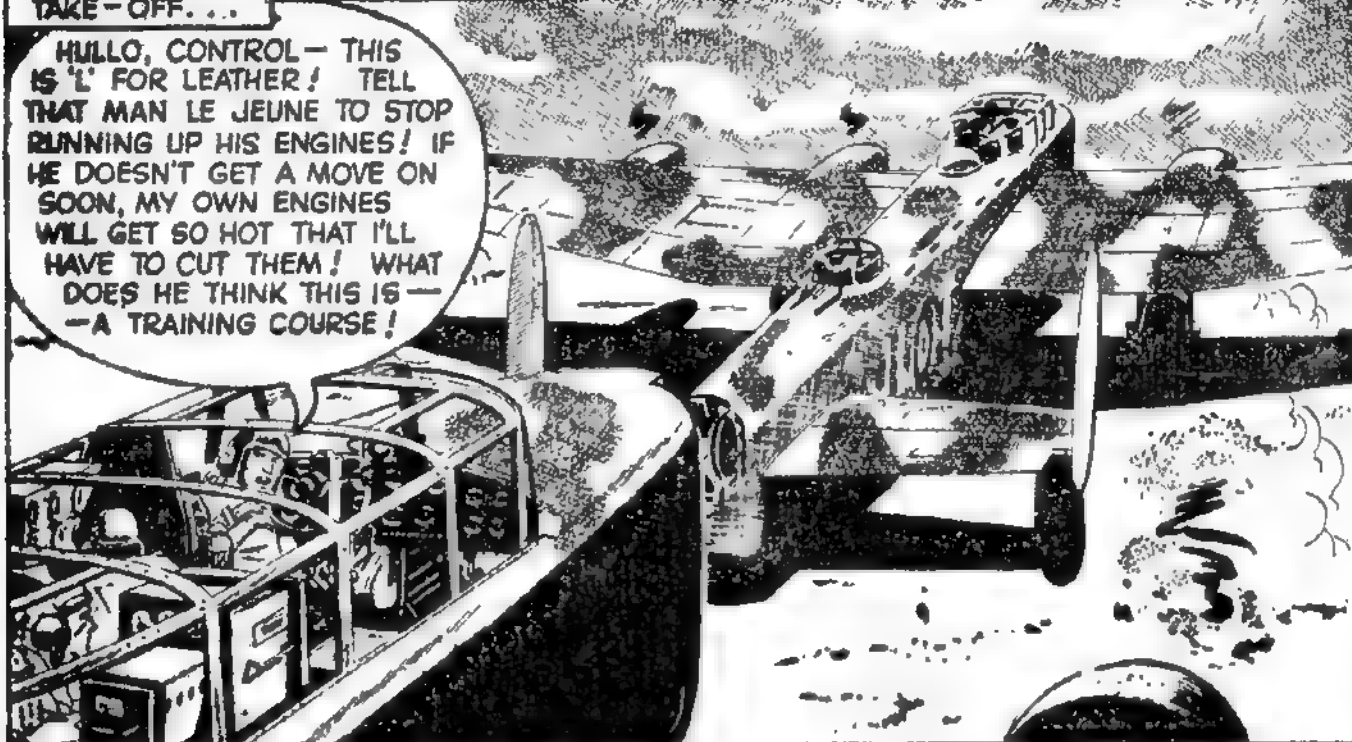


THE VOICE OF SQUADRON LEADER GREEN BROKE IN, HEAVILY LADEN WITH SCORN.



GREEN WAS CONTINUALLY MAKING TROUBLE. LE JEUNE HAD A PHOBIA FOR TESTING HIS ENGINES THOROUGHLY—AND HE HAD A HABIT OF RUNNING UP HIS ENGINES AT THE END OF THE RUNWAY BEFORE TAKING OFF, ALTHOUGH THE USUAL PLACE FOR DOING THIS WAS AT THE MARSHALLING POINT. ON ONE OCCASION, SQUADRON LEADER GREEN'S LANCASTER WAS DIRECTLY BEHIND LE JEUNE'S, WAITING FOR TAKE-OFF. . .

HULLO, CONTROL—THIS IS 'L' FOR LEATHER! TELL THAT MAN LE JEUNE TO STOP RUNNING UP HIS ENGINES! IF HE DOESN'T GET A MOVE ON SOON, MY OWN ENGINES WILL GET SO HOT THAT I'LL HAVE TO CUT THEM! WHAT DOES HE THINK THIS IS—A TRAINING COURSE!



SOON AFTER THAT, IN THE MESS, SQUADRON LEADER GREEN HAD A FEW THINGS TO SAY IN A LOUD AND PENETRATING VOICE—AND HE SAID THEM TO THE ADJUTANT, WHEN LE JEUNE WAS WELL WITHIN HEARING. . .

THERE GOES THAT WILD COLONIAL BOY! THE NEXT TIME HE STANDS ON THE END OF THE RUNWAY AND MUCKS ABOUT WITH HIS ENGINES, HE'LL GET MY PROPELLER WRAPPED ROUND HIS TAIL TURRET, THE ONE-TOUR HICK. . .

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, GREEN—KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!



LE JEUNE'S NECK FLUSHED DANGER-RED.

STEADY, MAN—STEADY! IF YOU PIN HIS EARS BACK HE'LL HAVE YOU IN THE GUARDROOM—
AND THAT'S JUST WHERE HE WANTS YOU!

I'VE HAD JUST AS MUCH AS I'M GOING TO STAND—!

NOTHING WAS MORE DANGEROUS TO THE MORALE OF A HEAVY BOMBING SQUADRON THAN TENSION BETWEEN PILOTS—AND WHEN THE C.O. GOT WIND OF THE SITUATION DEVELOPING BETWEEN GREEN AND LE JEUNE, HE SENT FOR THE YOUNGER MAN...

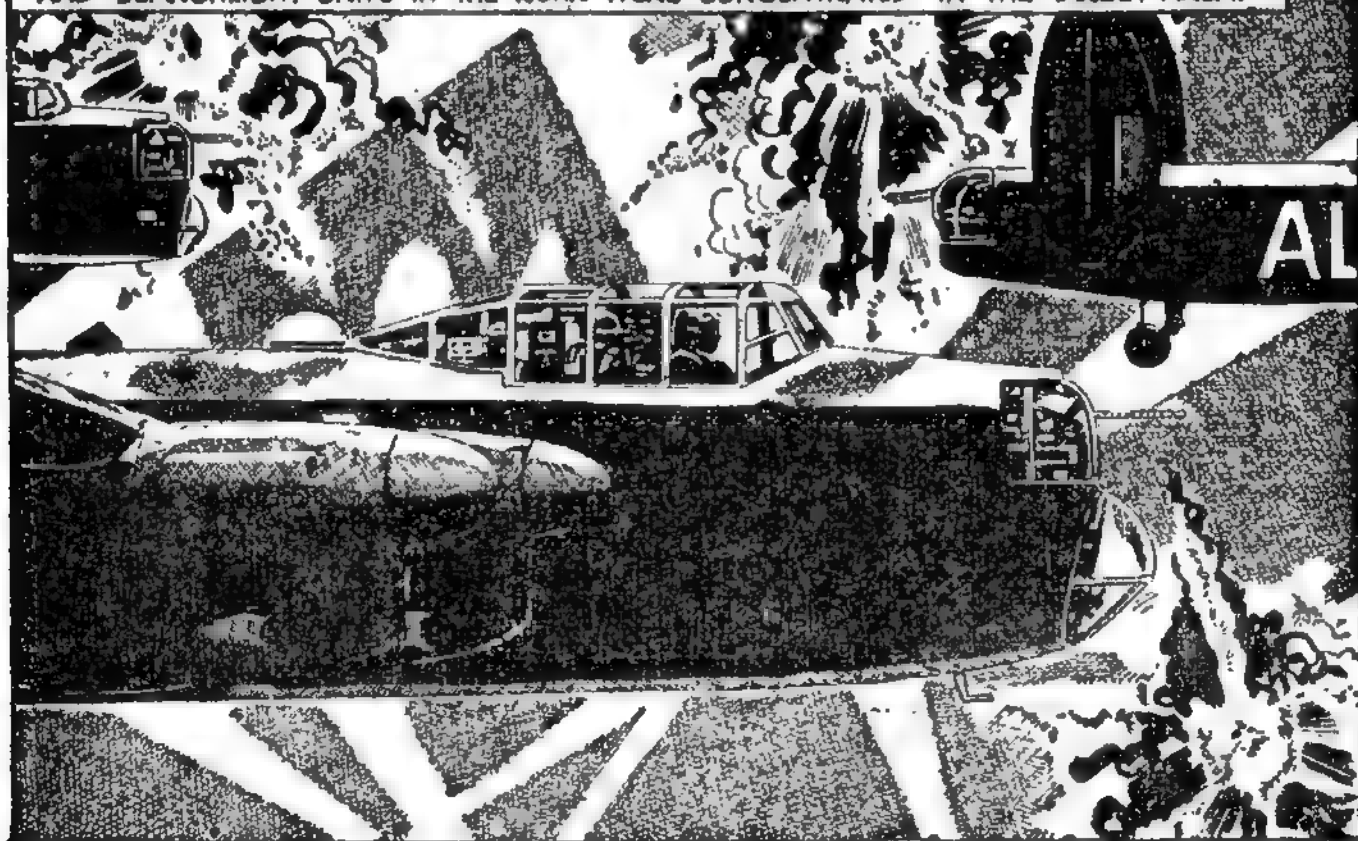
COME NOW, LE JEUNE—LET'S HAVE IT! I CAN'T IMAGINE AN EXPERIENCED OFFICER LIKE GREEN—A THREE-TOUR MAN, IN FACT—TURNING NASTY ON A JUNIOR OFFICER WITHOUT SOME PROVOCATION! I KNOW HE TOOK A DIRTY ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOU AT THE COURT—MARTIAL—BUT THAT WAS HIS JOB!

YOU'VE GOT ME COMPLETELY WRONG, SIR! PERHAPS I HAVE GOT A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER,—BUT IT ISN'T AT GREEN! THE TROUBLE WITH THAT COBBER IS THAT HE'S FLOWN JUST ONE TOUR TOO MANY, AND IS LOOKING FOR TROUBLE! IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, ASK HIS CREW...

IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT SQUADRON LEADER GREEN, AS TIME WENT ON, WAS GETTING MORE AND MORE 'FLAK HAPPY' AND HAD DEVELOPED A DANGEROUS TENDENCY TO TAKE HIS LANCASTER IN LOW DURING HEAVY RAIDS JUST TO 'HAVE A LOOK'. IN FACT, THAT NIGHT, AS THE SQUADRON WAS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF FOR COLOGNE, GREEN'S NAVIGATOR HAD AN ANXIOUS WORD WITH LE JEUNE...



THAT NIGHT, "HAPPY VALLEY" LIVED UP TO ITS NAME — FOR SEEMINGLY ALL THE FLAK AND SEARCHLIGHT UNITS IN THE RUHR WERE CONCENTRATED IN THE TARGET AREA.



AS THE GREAT FORCE OF FIVE HUNDRED BOMBERS MOVED IN, WAVE ON WAVE, TO DELIVER THEIR TITANIC PUNISHMENT, COLOGNE BURNED FAR BELOW LIKE A HEAP OF GLOWING EMBERS. FROM 20,000 FEET, LE JEUNE LOOKED DOWN INTO THE INFERNO, . .

MY STARS! THERE'S SOME JOKER DOWN THERE WHO'S DICING WITH DEATH! LOOK AT HIM—HE'S AT FOUR THOUSAND FEET, AND THE SEARCHLIGHTS ARE ON TO HIM!

I BET YOU ANY MONEY IT'S THAT CLOT GREEN—DEATH-OR GLORY-GREEN!



WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 41 RED CROSS OF COURAGE No. 42 PHANTOM FORCE FIVE
No. 43 THREE-TWO-ONE-ZERO!

ALSO ON SALE NOW

Pathfinder

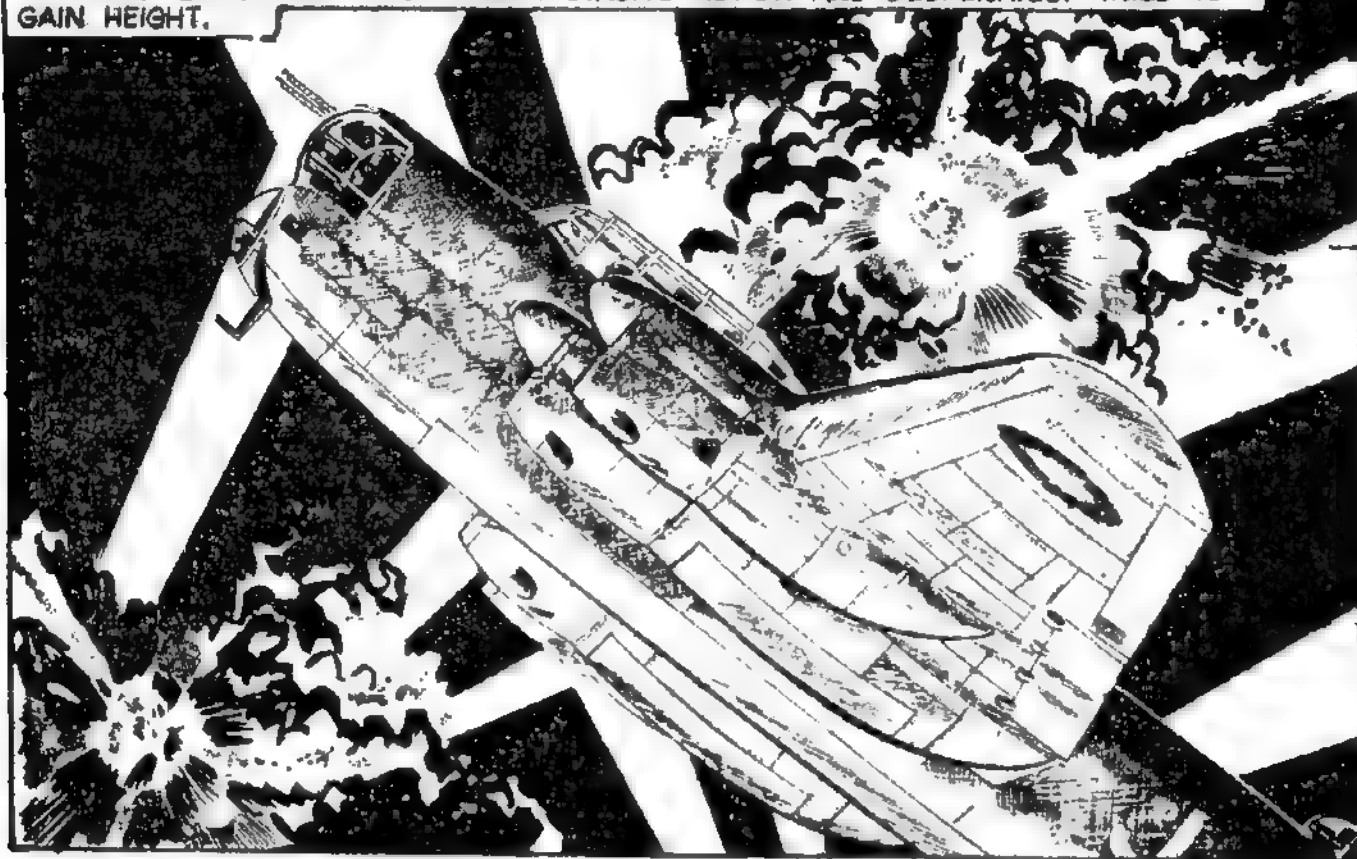
AND THE PILOT OF THE LANCASTER DOWN IN THE INFERNO WAS GREEN, ALL RIGHT. DRIVEN BY AN INSANE URGE GREATER THAN THE CRAWLING FEAR INSIDE HIM, HE HAD 'GONE DOWN TO HAVE A LOOK' — AND AS HIS LADEN MACHINE HEAVED DESPERATELY THROUGH THE SMOKE-FILLED AIR, THE FLAK CLOSED RELENTLESSLY IN...



A VIOLENT EXPLOSION SUDDENLY ROCKED THE LANCASTER, AND THE STENCH OF BURNT CORDITE FILLED THE FUSELAGE — AIR RUSHED THROUGH A NEWLY-BLASTED HOLE IN THE PLANE...



SHAKEN BY HIS FLIGHT ENGINEER'S VEHEMENT OUTBURST, GREEN THREW THE BATTERED LANCASTER INTO VIOLENT EVASIVE ACTION AND DESPERATELY TRIED TO GAIN HEIGHT.

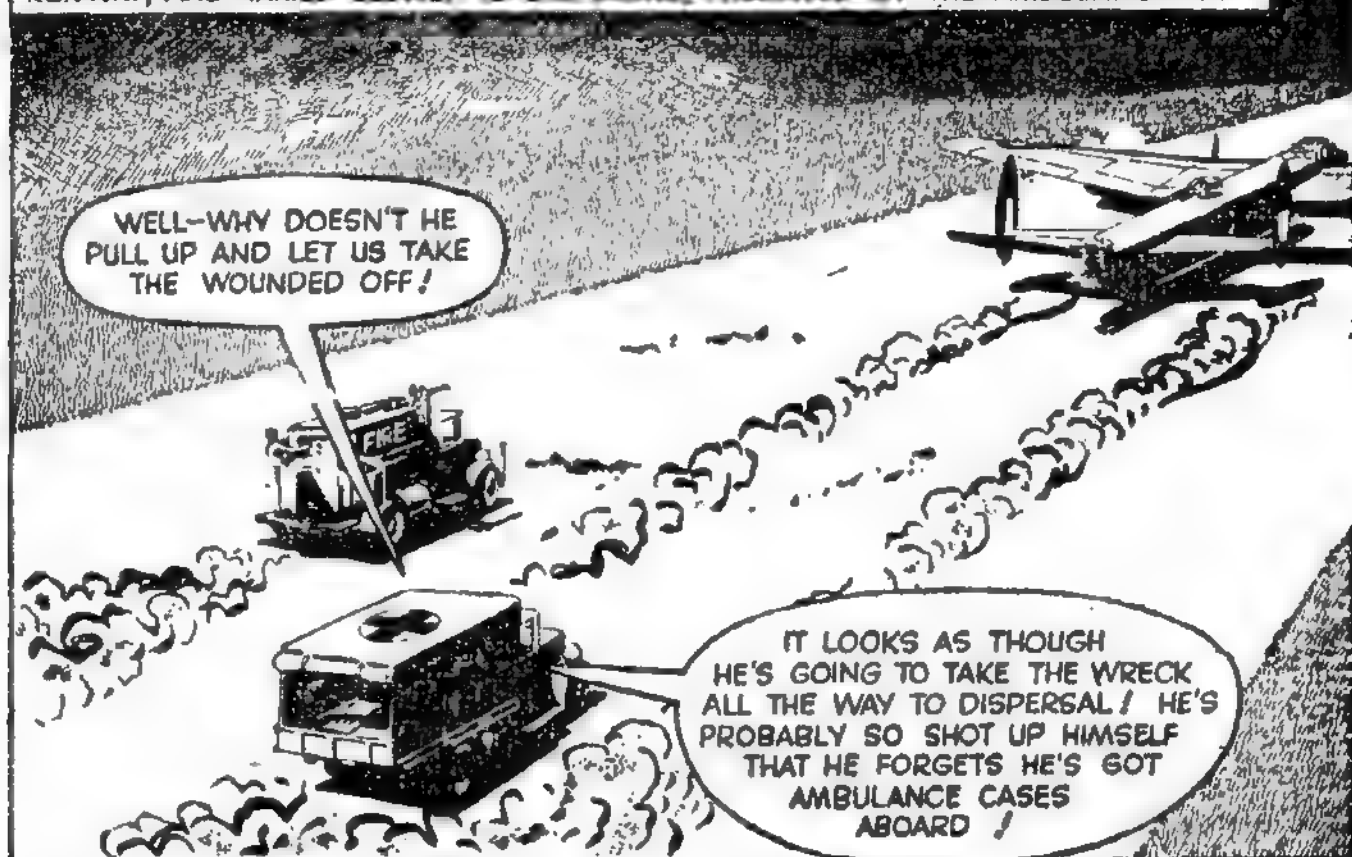


IT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY BEFORE THEY THREW OFF THE SEARCHLIGHT CONE AND FINALLY REACHED CLEARER AND SAFER SKIES. WITH TWO ENGINES FEATHERED, AND REEKING OUT OMINOUS STREAMS OF OILY SMOKE, THEY LIMPED FOR HOME... THREE HOURS LATER, IN THE GRIM DAWN LIGHT, THEY CAME IN TO LAND...

HULLO, MAY TREE —
THIS IS 'L' FOR LEATHER!
THERE ARE WOUNDED ABOARD
—BRING THE AMBULANCE
TO MEET US...



THE GAUNT, RIDDLED HULK OF GREEN'S 'L' FOR LEATHER BUMPED HEAVILY ON TO THE RUNWAY, AND TAXIED SLOWLY TO DISPERSAL, FOLLOWED BY THE AMBULANCE...



IN THE OPS. ROOM A FEW OF THE OTHER LATE CREWS WERE STILL AROUND AND LISTENING WHEN SQUADRON LEADER GREEN AND WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIS CREW GAVE IN THEIR REPORT...

SO I WENT IN TO SEE WHAT IT WAS LIKE FROM FOUR THOUSAND FEET—AND WE WERE BEETLING ALONG MERRILY UNTIL MY ENGINEER LOST HIS NERVE! HE PRACTICALLY FORCED ME TO RUN IN THE FACE OF ENEMY FIRE...



IT WAS A HAGGARD AND EXHAUSTED GREEN, HIS NERVES STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT BY THE UNNECESSARY ORDEAL HE HAD PUT HIMSELF THROUGH, WHO SAT SLUMPED IN HIS CHAIR IN THE MESS-HALL. INSTEAD OF EATING BREAKFAST, HE DRAGGED AT A CIGARETTE...



TO GREEN, SITTING THERE IN HIS MISERY, THE NAME OF LE JEUNE WAS LIKE A RED RAG TO A BULL...



BUT GREEN HAD MADE HIS POINT — AND HAVING TAKEN OUT HIS OWN MISERY ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S HEAD, HE KICKED BACK HIS CHAIR, AND SHOULDERS HIS WAY OUT OF THE MESS....



BUT GREEN'S BITTER MALICE IN THE HEARING OF SO MANY OTHERS HAD CUT DEEP INTO THE YOUNG AUSTRALIAN'S SENSE OF FAIR PLAY — AND HE PURPOSEFULLY MADE HIS WAY OUT OF THE MESS-HALL TO GREEN'S QUARTERS...



LE JEUNE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, DUMBFOUNDED — FOR THIS WAS NOT THE ARROGANT 'THREE-TOUR' MAN, THE DEATH-OR-GLORY SQUADRON LEADER, ANY LONGER. THE HAGGARD FIGURE THAT SAT ON THE BED WAS THAT OF A BROKEN MAN, A MAN AT THE END OF HIS TETHER.

LOOK, COBBER — IF THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG...

SAVE YOUR SYMPATHY, CURSE YOU — YOU'VE JUST FINISHED THIRTY OPERATIONS, AND YOU THINK YOU KNOW THE LOT! BUT YOU DON'T KNOW HALF OF IT — YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COMING TO YOU! WAIT TILL YOU'VE DONE EIGHTY-NINE, LIKE I HAVE — THEN YOU'LL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WAIT FOR THE LAST TERRIBLE TRIP — THE TRIP THAT'LL GET YOU!

GAZING AT THE BROKEN MAN ON THE BED, LE JEUNE FELT UTTERLY SORRY, AND HIS ANGER LEFT HIM. CLOSING THE DOOR QUIETLY, HE WENT IN SEARCH OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

FRANKLY, LE JEUNE, I'D SUSPECTED THIS FOR SOME TIME — BUT DON'T LET THE NEWS GET AROUND! IT MIGHT BE BAD FOR SQUADRON MORALE...

IT'S RATHER BAD LUCK FOR HIS CREW, DOC — THEY'VE ONLY ONE OPERATION TO GO, AND NOW THEY'LL BE STOOD DOWN TO WAIT FOR A ROOKIE PILOT! THE LEAST I CAN DO IS FLY HIS LAST MISSION FOR HIM — SINCE IT WAS ME WHO SENT HIM OVER THE EDGE...



THE SQUADRON DOCTOR GAVE GREEN AN INJECTION, AND LE JEUNE WENT TO SEE THE C.O. HE EXPLAINED THE POSITION TERSELY — AND THEN CAME OUT WITH HIS SURPRISING DECISION TO FLY 'L' FOR LEATHER ON THE LAST OPERATION OF THE TOUR. COCKING ONE EYEBROW, THE C.O. SENT FOR GREEN'S CREW. . . .



... SO IT'S LIKE THIS, SIR — YOU SAID ONCE THAT I MUST HAVE BEEN STICKING MY NECK OUT TO GET GREEN RILED! YOU WERE PROBABLY RIGHT — SO THAT MAKES ME TO SOME DEGREE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS BREAKDOWN. AT LEAST, THAT'S HOW I SEE IT! SO, IF I FLY HIS LAST OPERATION FOR HIM, I'M CLEARING THE SLATE — DO YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN?

YOU'RE A QUEER AUSSIE IF EVER THERE WAS ONE, LE JEUNE — BUT I THINK I GET YOUR ANGLE! NOW, ARE THE REST OF YOU HAPPY ABOUT THE SET-UP?

THE ANSWER CAME WITHOUT HESITATION FROM THE NAVIGATOR OF THE CREW.



WELL, SIR — TO BE QUITE FRANK, I'M GLAD THAT SQUADRON LEADER GREEN CRACKED UP WHEN HE DID! I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE FACED ANOTHER OR WITH HIM. I'D BE HAPPY WITH LE JEUNE AS SKIPPER!

THAT GOES FOR ME, TOO. WE'LL BE FLYING WITH A ROOKIE SPARKS AND WE DON'T WANT A ROOKIE SKIPPER AS WELL. . . .

Chapter 5. PATHFINDER TO GLORY

SO LE JEUNE STOOD IN FOR GREEN IN THE LAST OPERATION OF 'L' FOR LEATHER'S THIRD TOUR—AND HE TOOK HIS PLACE WITH GREEN'S CREW AT THE BRIEFING, THREE NIGHTS LATER...



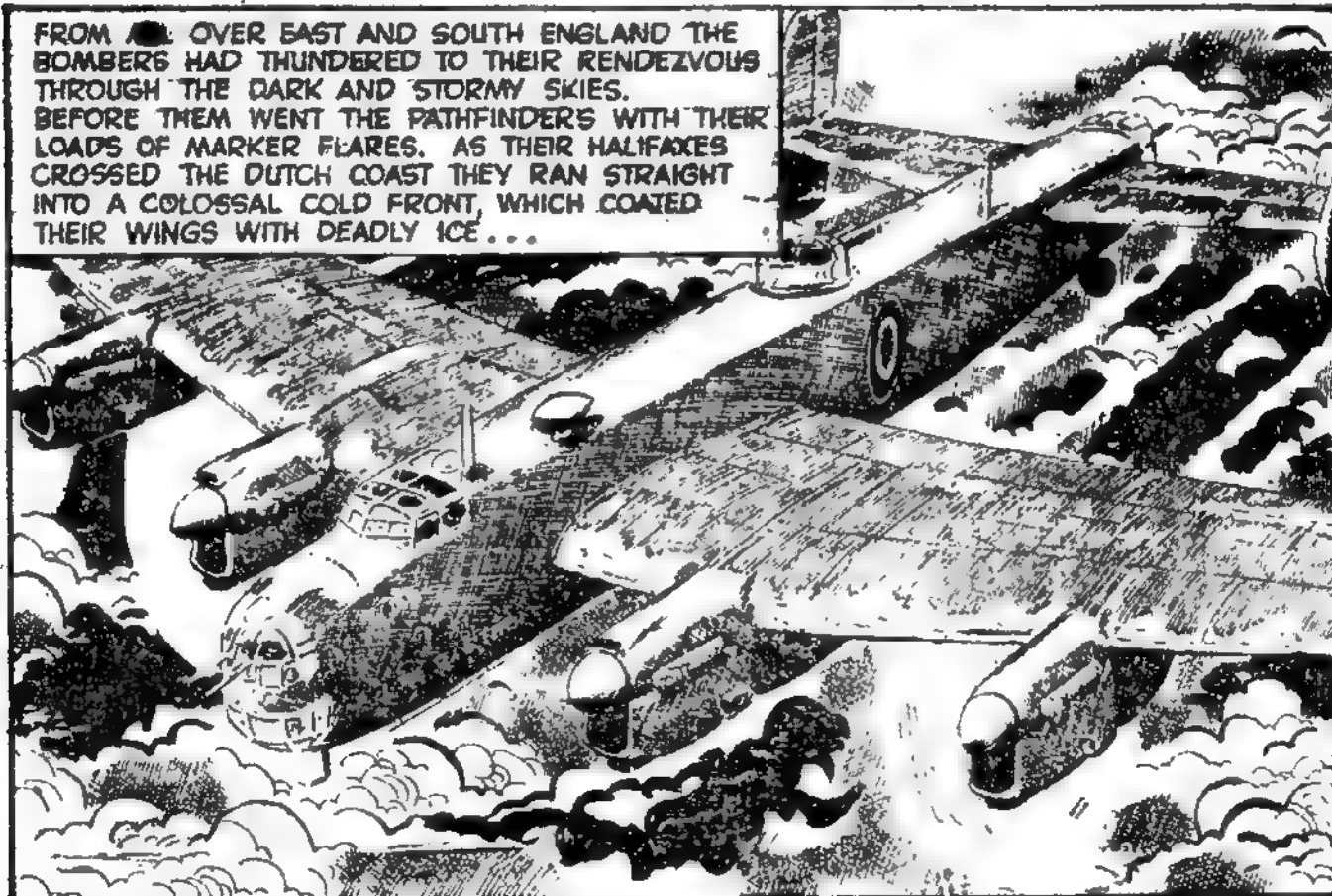
IT WAS THE FOULEST OPERATIONAL WEATHER OF THAT WINTER. THE SQUADRON TOOK OFF INTO A VIOLENT THUNDERSTORM—AND AS THEY CLAWED THEIR WAY UPWARDS OVER BASE TO OPERATIONAL HEIGHT, EACH AIRCRAFT WAS RINGED IN THE EERIE SHIMMERING OF ST. ELMO'S FIRE—A PECULIAR EFFECT OF STATIC ELECTRICITY...



AT 17,000 FEET, LE JEUNE'S LANCASTER WAS STILL IN CLOUD—AND EVEN WITH THE BLOWERS ON, AND THE ENGINES HEAVILY SUPERCHARGED, THE GREAT BOMBER REFUSED TO LIFT ABOVE 22,000 FEET. AS IT SHUDDERED ON THROUGH THE VIOLENT CURRENTS OF THE CUMULO-NIMBUS...



FROM OVER EAST AND SOUTH ENGLAND THE BOMBERS HAD THUNDERED TO THEIR RENDEZVOUS THROUGH THE DARK AND STORMY SKIES. BEFORE THEM WENT THE PATHFINDER'S WITH THEIR LOADS OF MARKER FLARES. AS THEIR HALIFAXES CROSSED THE DUTCH COAST THEY RAN STRAIGHT INTO A COLOSSAL COLD FRONT, WHICH COATED THEIR WINGS WITH DEADLY ICE...



THE LEADER OF THE PATHFINDERS
FOUND HIMSELF IN A DESPERATE
SITUATION. . .

PILOT TO CREW. WE'RE
ICED UP PRETTY SOLID AND
THERE'S NOTHING MUCH I CAN
DO ABOUT IT, UNLESS SOME HERO
WOULD LIKE TO GO OUT ON TO
THE WINGS WITH A PICK-AXE!
GET READY TO ABANDON
AIRCRAFT—AS SOON AS
YOU FEEL HER STALLING,
JUMP!

AT LEAST WE'RE
OVER LAND, SKIP. I'D
HATE TO DROP INTO THE
NORTH SEA TONIGHT...

JETTISONING HIS FLARES, THE PATHFINDER PILOT STROVE DESPERATELY FOR HEIGHT—
BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. AS THE AIRSCREWS ICED UP, THE HUGE HALIFAX LOST SPEED. . .

ROBERT ORANGE
TO SUGAR EASY—WE'RE
ICED UP—GOING DOWN—
—TRYING TO PULL HER
OUT—IT'S NO USE...

NOT ONE PATHFINDER GOT THROUGH THAT TERRIBLE CURTAIN OF ICE. AT Bomber Command H.Q., THE PICTURE OF THE OPERATION AS IT WAS PLOTTED GREW GRIMMER AND GRIMMER...

...THE SITUATION IS BECOMING FRIGHTFUL, SIR—WE LOOK LIKE LOSING MORE BOMBERS TONIGHT THAN WE'VE LOST FROM ENEMY ACTION IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS! WOULDN'T IT BE WISER TO CALL THE OPERATION OFF?

CAN'T, OLD MAN—IT'S A PRESTIGE RAID! I'VE INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY THAT IT **MUST GO THROUGH!** THREE DAYS AGO MET. SAID IT WOULD BE EXCELLENT FLYING WEATHER—AND THE OLD MAN ASSURED INTELLIGENCE THAT THEIR TARGET WOULD BE OBLITERATED...

AT THAT MOMENT, 22,000 FEET ABOVE THE NORTH SEA, IN THE CABIN OF LANCASTER 'L' FOR LEATHER...

THIS IS THE PART OF THE TRIP THAT ALWAYS GETS ME, SKIPPER—THE WAITING! HERE WE...

HOLD IT, COBBER—LOOK! DO YOU SEE THAT!



FOR A MOMENT THE THICK OBSCURING MASS OF CLOUD WHICH LAY ENDLESSLY IN THE LANCASTER'S PATH HAD THINNED — AND LE JEUNE, WITH HIS SHARP INSTINCTIVE BUSH-PILOT'S SIGHT, HAD SEEN A RIFT IN THE CLOUDBANKS. HE FLUNG THE STICK OVER, AND 'L' FOR LEATHER BANKED STEEPLY OFF COURSE...

BUT, SKIP — WE'RE ON A SET COURSE FOR ESSEN! ONCE WE START DODGING AROUND IN THIS KIND OF WEATHER, WE'RE LIABLE TO END UP ANYWHERE...

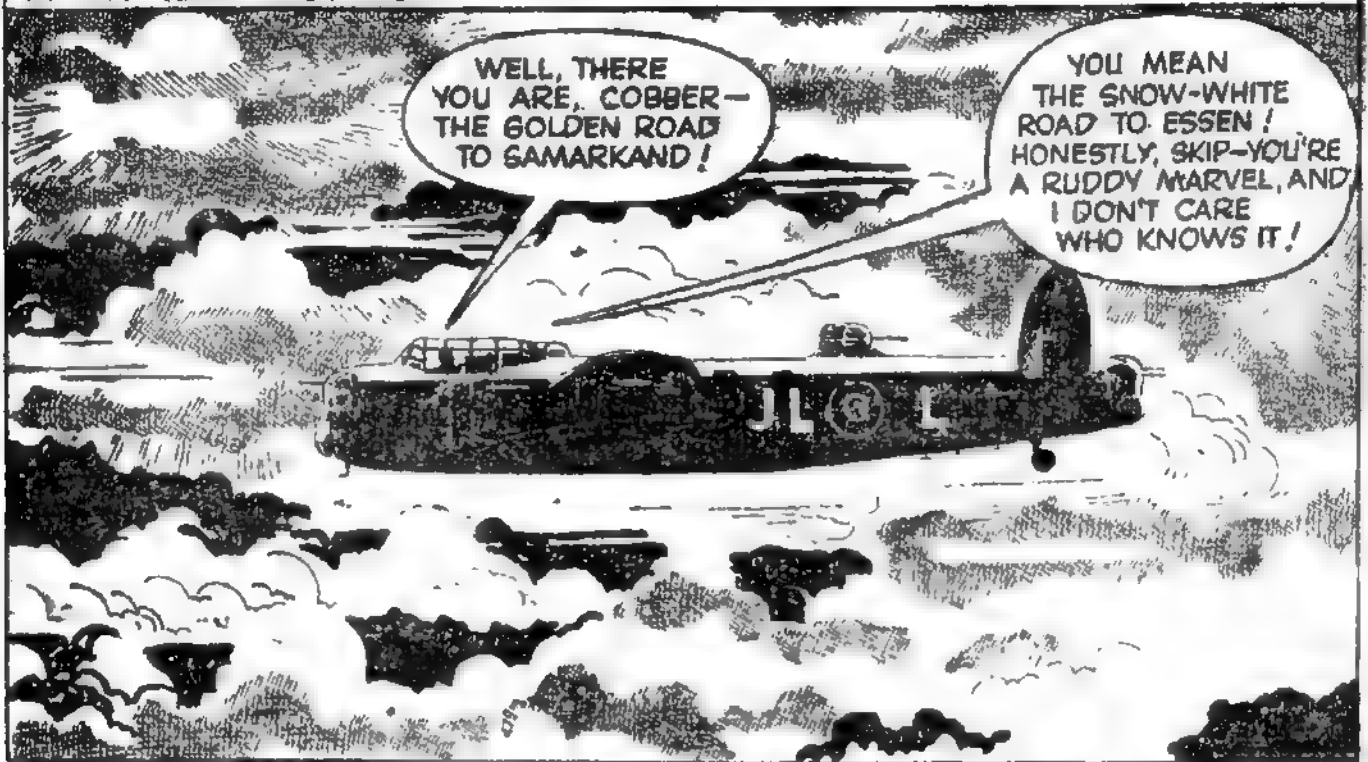
TOO RIGHT, MATEY — BUT LOOK AT IT MY WAY! IF WE HIT THE PREDICTED COLD-FRONT WHILE WE'RE STILL IN CLOUD, THE PROPS WILL FREEZE UP SO SOLID THAT WE'LL GO DOWN LIKE A STONE! IF WE CAN STAY **OUT** OF CLOUD, WE'VE GOT SOME CHANCE — SO I'M GOING TO TAKE A RISK...

THUNDERING ROUND IN A TIGHT TURN, 'L' FOR LEATHER ABRUPTLY BROKE OUT OF CLOUD — AND IT WAS JUST AS LE JEUNE HAD SUSPECTED. A GREAT CHASM OF CLEAR AIR, ABOUT SIX HUNDRED FEET IN DEPTH, STRETCHED ON INTO THE DARKNESS, WITH THE CUMULO-NIMBUS CLOUD PILING TURBULENTLY ON EITHER SIDE...

JUST LIKE SOME HIGH-ALTITUDE GULF-STREAM, EH, SKIPPER? ONLY, JUDGING BY THE COMPASS, IF WE STICK TO THIS COURSE WE'LL COME OUT AT NORWAY...

YOU DON'T GET THE POINT, COBBER — NOW THAT WE'RE IN SOME CLEAN AIR WE CAN **CLIMB**! WE'LL BE ABOVE THAT SOUP IN TWENTY MINUTES!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER, WITH THE ALTIMETER NEEDLE FLICKERING AT 28,000 FEET, THE LABOURING 'L' FOR LEATHER ROSE SLOWLY OVER THE EASTERN WALL OF THE 'CHASM' — AND LE JEUNE AND HIS FLIGHT ENGINEER SAW, STRETCHING FAR INTO THE DISTANCE, THE UPPER SURFACE OF THE CLOUD BANK, RADIANTLY WHITE IN THE CLEAR MOONLIGHT. . .



TWO HOURS LATER. . .



'L' FOR LEATHER DROPPED STEEPLY INTO A CLOUD BANK...

WELL, MATEY, THIS IS WHERE WE DO A 'GREEN' AND GO BELOW TO HAVE A LOOK! WITH ANY LUCK, CLOUD BASE MIGHT BE ROUND ABOUT EIGHT THOUSAND...

I WONDER WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS? THERE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE THREE HUNDRED BOMBERS ON THIS LARK...

THE CREW OF 'L' FOR LEATHER WERE NOT TO KNOW THE TERRIBLE TOLL THAT GRIM WEATHER CONDITIONS HAD TAKEN OF THE MASS BOMBER FORMATIONS. OUT OF 300 BOMBERS, 200 AND MORE HAD BEEN ICED-UP, WRECKED OR FORCED BACK TO BASE. THE REMAINDER WERE NOT PARTICULARLY SKILFUL OR BRAVE—ONLY LUCKY. SLIDING THROUGH GAPS IN THE APPALLING WEATHER SALIENT, THEY HAD GROPED THEIR WAY THROUGH TO THE TARGET AREA. NOT A SINGLE PATHFINDER HAD SURVIVED.

AS 'L' FOR LEATHER FINALLY DROPPED THROUGH THE CLOUD BOTTOM AT 5000 FEET, LE JEUNE SAW A GRIM AND HOPELESS SIGHT...

MY SAINTED AUNT—WHAT A PICNIC WE'VE DROPPED INTO! THERE ISN'T A SINGLE MARKER FLARE! TEN-TENTHS CLOUD OVER THE TARGET AREA, AND EVERYBODY DODGING AROUND AT TREE-TOP HEIGHT LIKE A PACK OF FLIPPING BATS!

IT'S A HEARTBREAK, SKIPPER—WE MAY AS WELL DROP OUR LOAD ON THE NEAREST SEARCHLIGHT, AND THEN SCOOT!

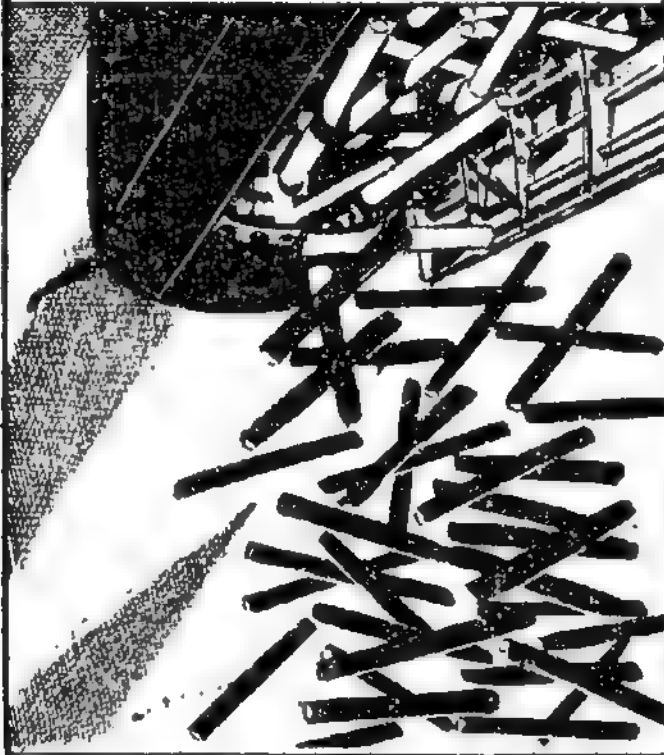
BUT LE JEUNE HAD NOT COME ALL THAT WAY FOR NOTHING — AND AS HIS LADEN MACHINE SLANTED DOWN THROUGH THE BUFFETING SLEET, HE YELLED BITTER INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS NAVIGATOR...



AT 500 FEET, 'L' FOR LEATHER ROCKETED IN ACROSS ESSEN...



THE LONG LOW SHEDS OF THE NEW FACTORY FLASHED UNDER THE BOMB-AIMER'S SIGHTS — AND LE JEUNE HELD THE PLANE STEADY AS IT CAME IN ON ITS SECOND RUN...



THE LANCASTER CLIMBED STEEPLY AWAY, AND LE JEUNE FLUNG OVER THE R.T. SWITCH AND BROKE RADIO SILENCE...

BANG ON THE NAIL, SKIPPER! WHAT A FIRE THAT'S GOING TO BE!

'L' FOR LEATHER TO ALL BOMBERS! WE'VE MARKED THE TARGET AREA WITH INCENDIARIES — COME IN AND DO YOUR STUFF! TARGET BEARINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS...



AS THE WHITE FLAMES FROM LE JEUNE'S PRIVATE INFERNO IN SOUTH WEST ESSEN SHOT SKYWARDS, HIS URGENT RADIO MESSAGE CRACKLED IN A HUNDRED HEADPHONES...

THANK HEAVENS FOR 'L' FOR LEATHER!

THAT MUST BE THEIR FIRE OVER THERE, SKIP — LET'S JOIN THE MERRY THROG, SHALL WE?

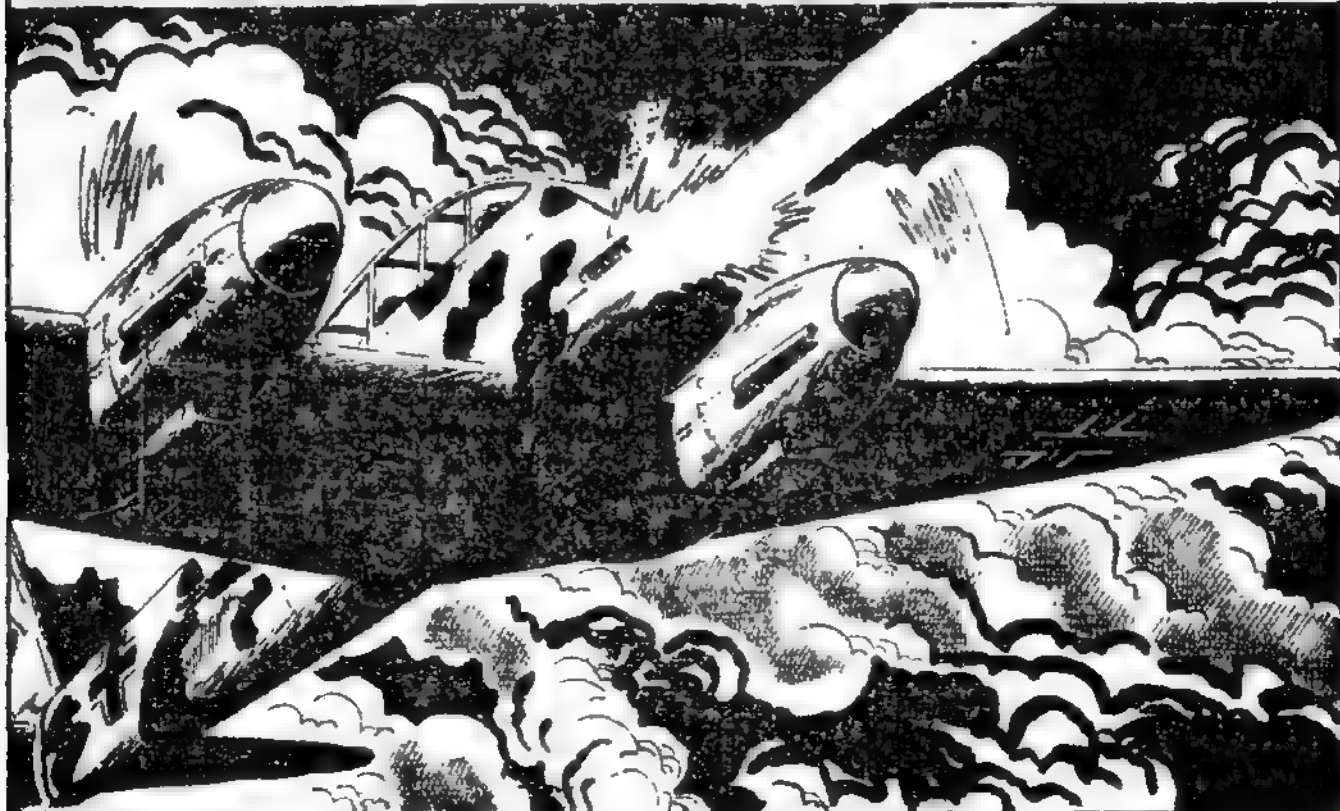
PITY HE HAD TO USE HIS R.T. — HE'LL BE A SITTING DUCK!



IN THE FEW BRIEF MOMENTS THAT LE JEUNE'S R.T. HAD FLASHED ON THE ETHER, GERMAN GROUND TRACKING CONTROL, TUNED TO R.A.F. WAVELENGTHS, HAD PLOTTED THE LANCASTER'S POSITION—AND THE BEARINGS WERE RELAYED TO AN M.E.210 NIGHTFIGHTER...



NEMESIS STRUCK LIKE LIGHTNING. ONE MOMENT 'L' FOR LEATHER WAS THUNDERING UP FROM THE TURMOIL OF ESSEN TOWARDS SAFER SKIES — THE NEXT INSTANT, RAKED FROM COCKPIT TO TAIL TURRET BY EXPLOSIVE CANNON SHELLS, SHE HAD 'BOUGHT IT' FOR EVER.



LE JEUNE, ONE LEG TORN BY SHRAPNEL, HELD THE RITE GRIMLY ON AN EVEN KEEL WHILE THE SURVIVING CREW BALED OUT. AND THEN HE STAGGERED TO THE ESCAPE HATCH — AND WAS SUCKED OUT BY THE SLIPSTREAM AS 'L' FOR LEATHER BUCKED OVER INTO ITS LAST DIVE...

MY LEG...
HOPE THE HUNS HAVE
DOCTORS...DID MY DUTY
ANYWAY...FINISHED
OLD GREEN'S TOUR
GOOD AND
PROPER...

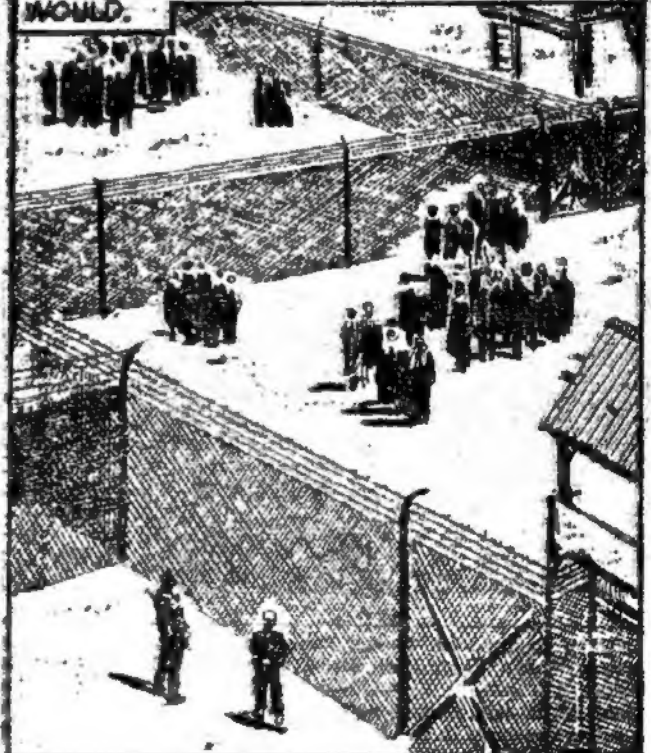


AND TEN MINUTES LATER THE YOUNG AUSTRALIAN SET FIRST FOOT ON GERMAN SOIL...



ALL RIGHT, COBBERS —
I'LL BE GOING QUIETLY!
THIS WAS NEVER MY WAR
ANYWAY — AND NOW THAT
I'VE STUCK MY NECK OUT
ONCE TOO OFTEN, I'M
OUT OF IT FOR GOOD!

AND SO HENRI LE JEUNE WENT TO STALAG LUFT III, HOME FOR SO MANY OF THE AIRCREW FROM THAT FATAL RAID. HE WAS STILL BITTER — FOR HE HAD NEVER HAD HIS CRACK AT THE JAPS, AND NOW HE NEVER WOULD.



BUT THE WORLD, INCREDIBLY, HAD NOT FORGOTTEN HIM — AND THREE MONTHS LATER, HE WAS CALLED INTO THE OFFICE OF THE CAMP KOMMANDANT...

STAND TO ATTENTION, YOU OAF — THIS IS IMPORTANT NEWS I GIVE YOU! I HAFF HERE ZER REPORT FROM ZER RED CROSS!



THE AUSTRALIAN GAPED IN UTTER SURPRISE AT THE KOMMANDANT'S NEXT WORDS...

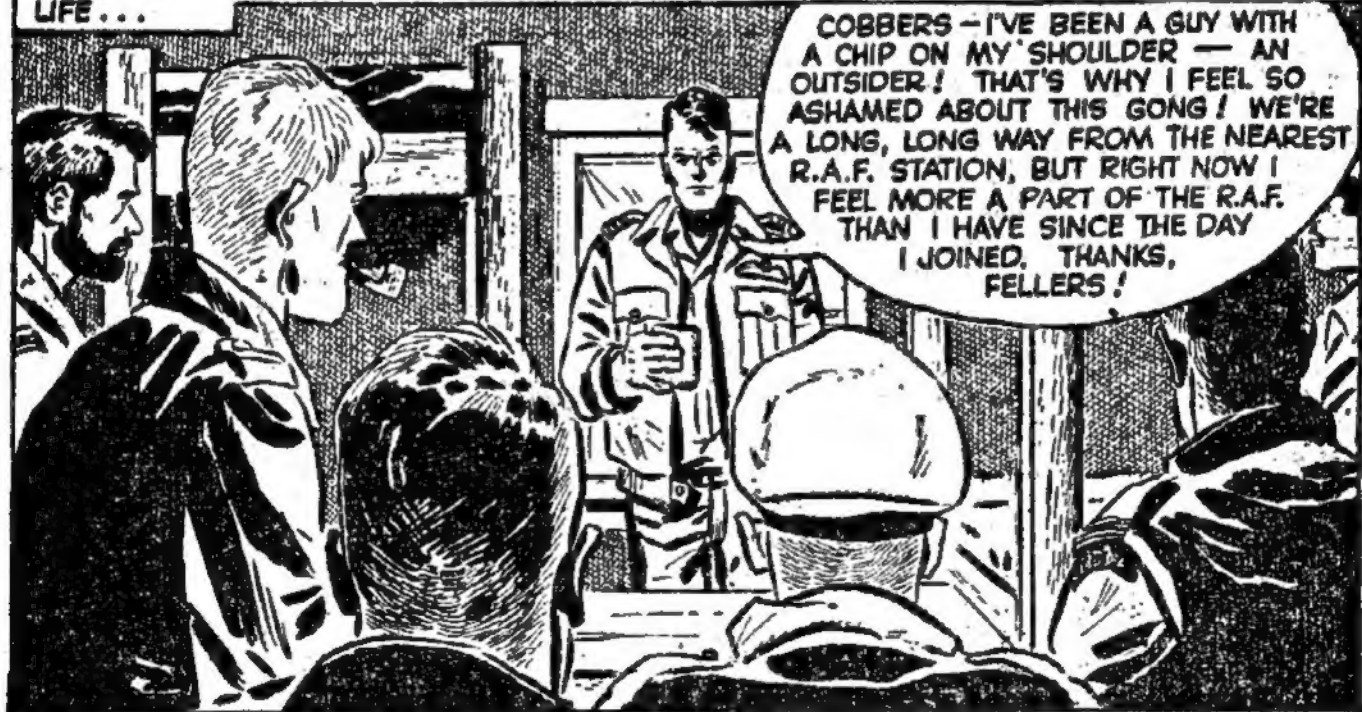
THE REPORT SAYS — AND I READ — FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HENRI PIERRE LACROSSE LE JEUNE — ZAT IS YOU, IS IT NOT? — HAS BEEN AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS FOR OUTSTANDING BRAVERY DURING OPERATIONS! I CONGRATULATE YOU!

WELL, CHASE ME UP A GUM TREE!



THAT NIGHT A SMALL PARTY GOT TOGETHER IN LE JEUNE'S HUT TO CELEBRATE. WITH A VERY FULL HEART HE GOT UP AND MADE THE FIRST AND LONGEST SPEECH OF HIS LIFE...

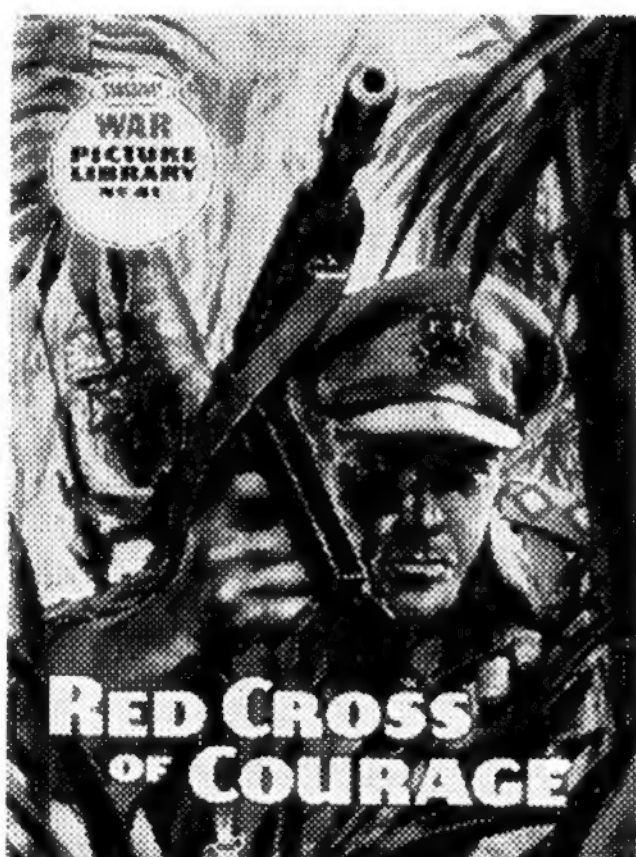
COBBERS — I'VE BEEN A GUY WITH A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER — AN OUTSIDER! THAT'S WHY I FEEL SO ASHAMED ABOUT THIS GONG! WE'RE A LONG, LONG WAY FROM THE NEAREST R.A.F. STATION, BUT RIGHT NOW I FEEL MORE A PART OF THE R.A.F. THAN I HAVE SINCE THE DAY I JOINED. THANKS, FELLERS!



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